Charles P. Kent.

Edwin Charles Hinckley, aged 14
Emmett Ellworth " " 12
Olive May " " 9
Laurena Linton " 7
Golden Kenneth " 4

Thanksgiving Day, 1910.
Virginia, Minn.

THANKSGIVING SERMONS

By

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DEDICATION

To the Dear Friends to Whom the Substance of these Messages was First Delivered, the Congregations of the Newton Center Methodist Episcopal Church and the Center Methodist Episcopal Church, Malden, Mass., with the Author's Thanksgiving for Their Fellowship and Service in the Gospel of Christ.

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PREFACE

THE sermons in this volume were all, with one exception, preached in the course of regular pastorates. They carry the marks of direct address, and have not been designed primarily with a view to research or argument. They are based upon a faith in a good God. No attempt is made to prove God's existence or God's kindness. The discourses are appeals rather than treatises.

Inasmuch as the sermons all deal with one general theme and were preached usually one year apart, memory did not hold fully the message of the preceding year, and there is naturally some repetition. Where the repeated part enters necessarily into the substance of the later sermon, it is allowed to remain; otherwise it is omitted. Save for changes of this kind, and the dropping of

local and temporary references, the sermons are printed quite largely in their original forms. The preacher who writes his sermons with due care composes enough material for a book every three months! This would make forty volumes in ten years! The enduring classics are not gotten in this wholesale fashion! The chapters in this book claim to be sermons—nothing more.

The volume will reveal the author's conception of the Thanksgiving Festival. He admits readily that his treatment of the day is unusual. He acknowledges his dissatisfaction with the method that uses the holiday almost solely for the discussion of national problems and the recital of national events. All of us have heard Thanksgiving sermons about national problems that did not make us thankful; and we have listened to sermons about national events that were modified Fourth of July orations liberally sprinkled with the name of God. The messages of this volume start from the thought

that the day is personal. Even in the two sermons which deal with the nation we have held to ideas that bear closely on the individual life.

The author is aware that Thanksgiving Day is a *national* holiday. In some form it has existed in the nation almost from the beginning. In 1621 Governor Bradford made provision for a day of rejoicing after the gathering of the first harvest by the New England colonists. In 1623 a drought prevailed, and a day of fasting was appointed. The rain came while prayers were rising, and the day was promptly changed to one of thanksgiving. The governors of the colonies fixed the custom for our people. During the Revolutionary War, Congress annually recommended a day of thanksgiving. In 1864 President Lincoln sent forth a proclamation for a national thanksgiving, and the example of the Great Commoner has been followed by all of his successors in the Presidency.

Much that is written in these sermons would be appropriate for any public service of praise. Each holiday has a constant meaning. The incarnation is true for every day; the resurrection touches all time. So Thanksgiving Day has its message for all other days even as it gathers its message from all other days. If some shall say that the volume does not deal specifically with thanksgiving for the unspeakable gift of God's Son, and for the gift of eternal life through Him, we shall remind them that this book is one of a series, and that personal courtesy, together with the desire to keep Thanksgiving Day from trenching upon the prerogative of other holidays, has forbidden the definite treatment of these themes.

If any shall claim that the history of the day gives it a national character and makes only civic themes appropriate for the public service, we shall not quarrel with that conception. We shall insist simply that the day has a personal mission and that we

bring failure to its observance unless our hearers are led in humble gratitude to the Most High. In any event, since the Festival is sure to abide with us, it becomes the duty of ministers to treat it with all seriousness and to save it from that formality of which, as the Old Testament assures us, God grows weary. When God becomes weary of the Day, the people will grow weary too. Like Him, they crave reality. These sermons are an indirect plea that Thanksgiving Day be kept true to itself. Therein lies its salvation. If the messages in this book shall dignify and strengthen the day in any heart or in any community, the author shall have his sufficient reward. EDWIN H. HUGHES.

I

THE THANKFULNESS OF A LAW GIVER

THANKSGIVING FOR THE LAND

TEXT: *"The land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."*—EX. XX, 12.

THANKSGIVING DAY is appointed by the head of the nation. The proclamation of the President of the Republic is usually followed by the proclamations of the governors of the various States. Inasmuch as the day came to us out of the stress of the Colony in 1621, and was nationalized by the stress of war in 1864, it is often treated as a civic day. The Fourth of July is supposed to deal more with the human side of the national life, while Thanksgiving Day recognizes the hand of God in our history. In the mind of the believer there is no conflict between these two conceptions, as we shall later observe. Perhaps our gratitude for the na-

tion will be most deeply stimulated if, instead of reviewing the mercies of a single year, we deal to-day with some broad faith as to the relation of God to our whole life as a people.

"The God of nations" is one of the fixed phrases of speech. Somehow a nation has always seemed something so vast and precious as to justify placing it immediately under the care of God. The timidity that hesitates to say that God counts the hairs of our heads is changed to boldness in the presence of great national movements. "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" did not daunt the faith of our people when it came out of that awful epoch in the last century. Men of all creeds found themselves singing:

"I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps;
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence in the dim and flaring lamps;
His day is marching on."

This was the confession that God in some real way was in that splendid and sacrificial era of our national life.

Now the text puts this view into a sweeping statement. The land is a *gift* of God—"the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The word was spoken to the Israelites. It occurs again and yet again in the Old Testament. It was the refrain of ancient patriotism. We find it first in a place of great dignity and moment. It worked its way from the heart of the Lawgiver and claimed room in the Ten Commandments. It has thus been oft repeated through many centuries. Men and women and little children have recited the law, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." God and Home and Native Land are here in the company of this one Commandment.

But the part of the Commandment which relates to the land is likely to be overlooked.

We must admit that it is not the main word of this fifth Law; yet we must allow that God dignified the thought of the nation when He brought it into association with the home and with Himself. A new revelation comes to us when once this phrase leaps from the page and shines before us with a sacred meaning, "The land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Our primary thought has rested upon the honor due to fathers and mothers; our secondary thought has occupied itself with the promise of long life; and we may hasten through this meaningful word about the land without noting that it carries with itself the name of God. But some day it halts us with this truth, "*God gives the land.*" We find ourselves waiting before the words that we may get their import. Thereafter the land partakes of the majesty and goodness of God; patriotism is purged of certain lower elements; and civic duty fits itself into an infinite plan and gets its inspiration straight from the Most High.

It may be profitable, then, on this Thanksgiving Day to give a more emphatic meaning to this slighted phrase in order that it may have a sure place in our hearts.

An interesting parallel may be drawn between the Israelitish nation and our own—between the Jews and the Puritans. Both revolted against what they deemed slavery; both sought out a strange land; both supplanted a native people; both labored under a profound sense of God; both were the means of matchless blessings to the world. If any one shall wish to urge that both entertained some dark ideas of theology and indulged occasionally in doubtful temper and conduct, we shall not deny the mournful resemblance; we shall urge only that people are to be tested by the standards of their age and, also, that it is some evidence of the almightiness of God that He accomplished so much by such imperfect agents! Inasmuch as both nations came to their separateness by way of a spiritual conviction, it was nat-

ural that the devout among both peoples should relate the beginnings of the land to the goodness of God and the continuance of the land to His purpose. The text carries both meanings. If the land is God's gift, then the land has God's intent fixed in its life. So it comes to pass that our gratitude and our responsibility meet in the text, "The land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

All this is general. We may go on to make some particular applications of the faith. We say "faith," because our viewpoint is a matter of real faith. If a man shall say that the land is not a gift, we can do nothing more than to ask him whence it came! If he shall say that the significant human life in the land has been made by men and shall fall in with Carlyle's idea in "Heroes and Hero-Worship," we may ask him whence came the men! If he shall say again that certain whirling and nameless forces worked out the mighty continent and developed the mighty men, we shall tell him

that the forces did very well indeed and are entitled to great credit! After all, atheism puts some dreadful strains on the mental life. This word about God's relation to the land has satisfaction for the intellect; but it is mainly a word of faith. The believer finds that from whatever standpoint he may consider his country, his mind and his heart jointly find God.

In her earlier life Harriet Martineau wrote a devotional book. In later life she claimed to become an atheist. One day she was visited by a lady whom she invited out into her garden. The flowers were blooming in beauty and profusion. Pointing to the flowers, Miss Martineau said, "Who would n't be grateful for blessings such as these?" The lady quickly replied, "Grateful to whom, Miss Martineau, on your theory?" The reply was, "Ah, you have me there!" * It was a passing incident, but it touched the problem of life. Faith holds to

*"James Martineau," Jackson, p. 14.

the literal statement that each flower in that garden was the gift of God. It moves on to the larger confession that the whole land was His gift. "In the beginning God"—this is the opening word of the Bible, and it is the opening word of the earth. If the land came out of chaos, out of the mist and star dust, out of æons of fire and cold, it is the gift of God. If it came by one swift act of creative power, it is still God's gift. "The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land." "The strength of the hills is His also." The processes by which the treasures of gold and silver, and iron and stone, were packed beneath the mountains are of God. The plans by which the fading harvests of unnumbered years dropped back into the earth, with the added enrichment won from the air, and made layer after layer of black fertility, are God's plans. We must ever return to the Hebrew conception. God's gift is august. When the materialist reminds us that life comes back for

its sustenance to the earth, as to the natural base of supplies, we shall not be quick to deny his claim; but we shall give the praise to God for His good gift of the earth. The stress of the materialist is, in a sense, a tribute to the excellence of God's gift. Even though some may deem the claim a crude one, faith sees this matchless territory lying between the two great oceans, not as a magnificent accident, nor yet as a necessitated formation moving out from insensate forces, but rather as a free gift. The broad domain is "the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

When we move upward into a higher realm of consideration the same thought follows. The effective discovery of this continent was timed by the All-Wise. Long before Columbus discovered America the Northmen landed upon our shores. Yet somehow the glory of the discovery has never been given to them. They went away and left the land sleeping upon the bosom of the

seas. God was not yet ready to turn this continent over to the hands of a new people. When its second and vital discovery came it did not come by any direct device of man. Columbus did not start out to find a new land; he started out to find a path to an old land. The lesson that he grasped as he ran his finger around the handle of the legendary hoe was that there might be a path through the seas to the Indies. He went forth to find that path. He did not dream that a huge continent would intercept his travel. Instead of a way through the seas, he found a world amid the seas. Joaquin Miller, in his poem which pays tribute to the courage of Columbus, writes thus:

"They sailed and sailed, as winds might blow,
Until at last the scared mate said:
'Why, now not even God would know
Should I and all my men fall dead;
These very winds forget their way,
For God from these dread seas is gone.
Now speak, brave Admiral, speak and say,'-
He said: 'Sail on, sail on, and on.'"

But God was not gone from those dread seas. They were His seas, the place of His own habitation. The pilot of that vessel was God. He knew the path.

It is not necessary now to recite the usual arguments. It is enough to say that the discovery came at the opening of the great modern period, and that it was accompanied shortly by inventions and migrations that gave the event strange effect. This much is surely true: Had some wise man deliberately timed the discovery of this continent to make it ready for the great uses of humanity, he could have made no finer choice of dates. But the white man found the land when he was not looking for the land. It was as if the Almighty had thrust before him a wonderful territory, bearing fruits and flowers, carrying on its shoulders splendid forests, hiding beneath its garments treasures for centuries of use, and had said to a startled race, "This is the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The discovery of Amer-

ica came from the choice of God, or it came from no choice at all. We are not likely to dignify our history by starting it from the freak of chance rather than from the plan of Providence. When Columbus knelt upon the shore and prayed, ere he lifted up the cross, he was true to the meaning of his unexpected discovery. It was a time for the giving of thanks, as it was likewise a time for the consecration of a new world.

Much of the same line of suggestion applies to the constitutional basis of the country. As we found the land when we did not start out to find it, so did we make a government when we did not begin with such a large intention. Some of our principles were worked out ere the nation became a political unit. State Churches and Republics do not usually live together happily. The Puritans purposed to unite Church and State. God did not allow their purpose to succeed. Many of them meant to be strictly loyal to the Church of England. It is said

that when Higginson left the mother country he stood on the stern of the ship and said, as he waved his hands to the receding shores: "We will not say, as the Separatists are wont to say at their leaving of England, 'Farewell, Babylon! Farewell, Rome!' but we will say, 'Farewell, dear England! Farewell, the Church of God in England!' We do not go to New England as separatists from the Church of England, but we go to practice the positive part of Church government." In Virginia an actual alliance existed between Church and State, and this continued to the very eve of the Revolution. The purpose of Higginson and his colleagues was foiled with reference to the Church. His platform must have appeared strange to his descendants of the third generation. The Puritan was destined to become an independent in his conception of Church government. He did not intend to have it so. Even though he himself protested in England, in the new land he was an advocate of a dif-

ferent type of conformity. But God hurried him on to a more liberal and spiritual conception of the Church. Independence won in ecclesiastical life—both in Massachusetts and in Virginia.

So was it with reference to political government. It was not in the minds of our forefathers to found a separate nation. They dreamed only of a perpetual colony for England. They were loyal to the king, even when he acted like a madman. They suffered long ere they broke the ties that held them to England. Twenty-five years prior to the beginning of the Revolution, Parliament had already passed twenty-nine different acts intended to put the colonists at a disadvantage and to cast premiums into the hands of British manfacturers and merchants.* Men often speak as if the Stamp Act and the tax on tea were lonely outrages; but they were simply culminations of many similar laws. The colonists entered upon

*"The War for Independence," Fiske, p. 43.

their struggle without a diffused sentiment for independence. Some think that Otis and the Adamses saw the certain issue, and that they worked deliberately and from the first toward the goal of a separate and republican national life. But there is nothing to indicate that James Otis, when he resigned the crown office of advocate-general and gave up its lucrative salary rather than to defend the revenue demands of England, and at once became attorney without fee for the Boston merchants, saw the end from the beginning; and it was a long time from the day when John Adams heard Otis's eloquent speech ere he declared that on that day "the child Independence was born." The colonists went into a war for justice—and they won Independence! The victory was far beyond their most glowing expectations. God thrust them out to become a separate nation with a peculiar mission. Directly they awoke to find in their hands a Constitution. We say that George Washington was "the

father of his country." In this case, as in the case of the individual, the fatherhood reaches back to God.

This takes us to another consideration. A nation is something deeper than territory, deeper also than a constitution. A land is not made up merely of valleys and mountains and prairies, and rivers and lakes and gulfs; nor is it merely a bundle of laws and codes. Territory and constitution get their national meaning only in souls. Whatever has been given to this land of moral and spiritual glory is of God. Take out of our land what has come into it because of the God-fearing spirit of our people, and you mutilate a splendid history and leave a poor and barren substitute. You dry up, even if you do not foul, the springs of our national life. Leave out God, and you have no *Mayflower* to launch. The breezes that pushed that ship over the ocean came from God; and the impulse that was in the hearts of its passengers came from God. Our his-

tory took its first steps at the door of the Church of God. The Declaration of Independence puts the name of God into its preamble; and it comes to its conclusion by speaking of "a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence." God entitles us to a certain standing; God has made certain rights inalienable; God will protect us—after all, there was much religion in the beginning of our nation. It looks as if the signers of the historic Declaration would have agreed with the word, This is "the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Possibly some may intimate that since men had heroic parts in bringing us to a separate national life, we do not need to speak of God. Here reappears the old idea that we get rid of God when we admit that He has agents! When life is lifted to some high power we do not yield to any such heterodoxy. The history of Thanksgiving Day is itself an illustration. President Lincoln gave out the first Presidential proclamation

for the national observance of the last Thursday in November as a Day of Thanksgiving. This proclamation was dated October 20, 1864. But that Proclamation of Thanksgiving was not the only one given out from the Executive Mansion in that year. Three others were given forth under the same date, September 3d. One gave thanks to God; two gave thanks to men. *The thanks to men were offered for the very same events that had called forth the Proclamation of Thanksgiving to God.* So significant are these coincident proclamations that it is worth our while to hear them in full in this service.* Here is the one that notes the human side of the victories on land:

"Executive Mansion,
September 3, 1864.

"The national thanks are tendered by the President to Major-General William T. Sherman and the gallant officers and soldiers

*"Messages and Papers of the President," Vol. VI, pp. 238-239.

of his command before Atlanta for the distinguished ability, courage, and perseverance displayed in the campaign of Georgia, which under divine favor has resulted in the capture of the city of Atlanta. The marches, battles, sieges, and other military operations that have signalized this campaign must render it famous in the annals of war and have entitled those who have participated therein to the applause and thanks of the nation.

"ABRAHAM LINCOLN."

In this proclamation God has His place; "under divine favor," our martyred President said. Then he gives out another call, tendering thanks to men, but slipping in the words "under the blessing of Providence:"

"EXECUTIVE MANSION,
September 3, 1864.

"The national thanks are tendered by the President to Admiral Farragut and Major-General Canby for the skill and harmony with which the recent operations in Mobile Harbor and against Fort Powell, Fort

Gaines, and Fort Morgan were planned and carried into execution; also to Admiral Farragut and Major Granger, under whose immediate command they were conducted, and to the gallant commanders on sea and land, and to the sailors and soldiers engaged in the operations, for their energy and courage, which, under the blessing of Providence, have been crowned with brilliant success and have won for them the applause and thanks of the nation.

"ABRAHAM LINCOLN."

"EXECUTIVE MANSION,
WASHINGTON, September 3, 1864.

"The signal success that Divine Providence has recently vouchsafed to the operations of the United States fleet and army in the harbor of Mobile, and the reduction of Fort Powell, Fort Gaines, and Fort Morgan, and the glorious achievements of the army under Major-General Sherman in the State of Georgia, resulting in the capture of the

city of Atlanta, call for devout acknowledgment to the Supreme Being, in whose hands are the destinies of nations. It is therefore requested that on next Sunday, in all places of public worship in the United States, thanksgiving be offered to Him for His mercy in preserving our national existence against the insurgent rebels who so long have been waging a cruel war against the Government of the United States for its overthrow; and also that prayer be made for the divine protection to our brave soldiers and their leaders in the field, who have so often and so gallantly periled their lives in battling with the enemy, and for blessing and comfort from the Father of Mercies to the sick, wounded, and prisoners, and to the orphans and the widows of those who have fallen in the service of their country; and that He will continue to uphold the Government of the United States against all the efforts of public enemies and secret foes.

"Abraham Lincoln."

These proclamations are worthy of a permanent place in the literature of Thanksgiving, not only because one of them marks the beginning of a national institution, but, even more, because they express a confident faith in the God who worked through men in saving the nation. They do not discuss the mystery of man's partnership. They put divine terms into the human thanksgiving and human terms into the divine thanksgiving. The more man Abraham Lincoln found in the war the more thanksgiving did he offer to God. In all this he betrays no sense of contradiction. There is no reason why we may not carry this union of gratitude back to the beginnings of our career as a nation. We thank God truly that in all our crises He has raised up strong men; and we thank men that they gave faithful heed to the divine call in behalf of the people. How often have we thanked God for Abraham Lincoln himself? Territory is God's gift; and men are God's gifts! God gave the Israelites a

Moses; He gave the Americans a Washington and a Lincoln. Therefore, from whatever direction we approach the land, we meet God. Each man may say to his own heart, "It is the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Patriotism needs just such a message as this to save it from degeneracy. No man can fail to be genuinely patriotic who feels that his country has in a deep sense been given to him by God Himself. Then the nation seems to partake of the greatness and glory of the Giver. It may sound somewhat superficial for a man to say that he is an American because he was born one; but the word is deeper than first appears. One feels the tie and obligation of a certain home because he was born into it; so one feels the tie of a certain nation because God chose it for him. If a man, born elsewhere, feels that he was led to these shores by the hand of God, and that he has staid here so long that, according to the divine law as written

in his own nature, his interests have been largely transferred to the land of his adoption, he also can repeat to himself the words, "The land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Whatever is ours by divine gift or divine appointment has for us a new sacredness. This reference of the feeling of patriotism back to God gives room for breadth. If patriotism is a mere prejudice, it tends to narrowness. If patriotism is a true instinct it tends to liberality. If God gives to other men their country, as He gives ours to us, we must honor their love even as we honor our own. Under this view we can feel naught but gladness when we see people from many nations coming to this word and taking it as their own, each citizen repeating the great phrase for his own instruction and inspiration, "The land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

This divine theory of the land has a bearing on the future. All faith points to duty. The gift of territory, Constitution, and spir-

itual impulse is not to be abused. Good men feel outraged when their gifts to others are made subject to waste and dissipation, and they feel the more outraged when their gifts to others are turned against themselves. This land is to be used for the Giver. This means that in reality it is to be used for the deepest good of men. Our outward service to God always reaches His children. If our people could live under this text's dominion, if they could all really feel that this land was the gift of God, the evils that infest our national life would vanish as darkness goes when morning comes. This is the land which God gives us. We are to hand it back to Him with its acres growing with His harvests, and its mountains towering to His glory. This is the constitution which God sent us by His messengers. We are to hand it back to Him—our laws filled with His Spirit, our courts dominated by His justice, our political principles governed by His righteousness. The spiritual grace

which dwelt in the hearts of our forefathers, and which dwells in the hearts of good men to-day, is the gift of God. Leonard Bacon long ago expressed the faith of our history and the faith of our prophecy:

"O God, beneath Thy guiding hand
Our exiled fathers crossed the sea;
And when they trod the wintry strand,
With prayer and psalm they worshiped Thee.

"Thou heard'st, well pleased, the song, the prayer;
Thy blessing came and still its power
Shall onward, through all ages, bear
The memory of that holy hour.

"Laws, freedom, truth, and faith in God
Came with those exiles o'er the waves;
And where their pilgrim feet have trod,
The God they trusted guards their graves.

"And here Thy name, O God of love,
Their children's children shall adore,
Till these eternal hills remove,
And spring adorns the earth no more."

II

THE THANKFULNESS OF A SEER

THANKSGIVING FOR LIFE'S VARIETY

TEXT: *"They are new every morning."*
—LAMENTATIONS iii, 23.

IN his drama, "The House of Rimmon," Henry Van Dyke brings the Hebrew maid to the door of the grievously afflicted Naaman to sing a song of cheer. The sun is rising in splendor. The author makes the maid true to the doctrine of her people who saw God's work in field and flower and did not falter in saying that His hand weaved the grace and beauty of the sunbeams. She beheld the opening day as a symbol of the divine love and sang it thus:

"Above the edge of dark appear the lances of the sun;
Along the mountain ridges clear his rosy heralds run;
The vapors down the valley go
Like broken armies, dark and low.

Look up, my heart, from every hill
In folds of rose and daffodil
The sunrise banners flow.

"O fly away on silent wing, ye boding owls of night!
O welcome little birds that sing the coming in of light!
For new, and new, and ever new,
The golden bud within the blue:
And every morning seems to say:
'There 's something happy on the way,
And God sends love to you!' "*

This sentiment is taught only in that school of faith which declares that God is so good and so great that He starts every day along its own new path, bringing to us new material blessings, letting us look into new faces, revealing to us new phases of truth, opening up to us new regions of character, and putting before us new opportunities for work. Under this view of the divine care even the Book of Lamentations ceases its wailing and says of the Lord's mercies, "They are new every morning." Instead of monotony we see variety; instead of occa-

* Page 78.

sional benefit the constancy of mercy; instead of heartless machinery, the hand of the loving God.

We will do well to tarry with this word for a time. It is peculiarly appropriate for the Thanksgiving season. If we can get it into our thought that the divine mercies are "new every morning," the quality of this holiday will flow forward over all the days of the year. Let us, then, fasten the text into our thought by noting the freshness which at every point God gives to relieve the lives of men. It is often said that "variety is the spice of life." If the divine mercies are new every morning we will find our time provided with a gracious variety. If we have not eyes to see the variety, we shall certainly not have palates to taste the spice. The call bids us open our eyes to the newness of the mercies which God invests in each new day.

We observe, first, that the divine mercies are ever new and varied at the point of ma-

terial blessings. Thousands of years ago, ere men had come to any accuracy of astronomical knowledge, they believed that a new sun arose every morning. It was the opinion that when the setting sun sank behind the hills it went down to death and never rose again. The next morning a new sun came from the cloudy depths and took its one day's journey over the face of the sky. They thought also that a new moon was really a new moon, not the old moon reappearing, but a "new moon" started afresh from the hand of the great Maker.* Though wrong from the scientific point of view, the ancients had a great truth hidden in their error. Changing their astronomy into something of correctness, it may be said that a new world turns daily toward the sun. The divine hand has moved over the surface, and though the general outlines may remain the same, God has imparted the touches of a new variety. New colors gleam from the fields; new fig-

* Watkinson, "The Program of Life," p. 25.

ures move across the clouds; new shades shine on leaves and flowers. The accurate eye will see that within the darkness of the night all things have been changed and that there is a new heaven and a new earth.

"We never look twice on the same river," is an old proverb. The stretch of water at which we gazed has passed ere we look again. So is it with the stream of the world life; it is never the same; new floods pour through the channels. Though the current may appear very much the same, it has received its newness and a strange stream goes by with a perpetual mingling of the water behind and before that prevents any definite identification of its own self. There is a story told of a man who tried to find two apples that were precisely alike. He carefully examined great quantities of fruit, only to find that every apple had its own peculiarity, and at last he gave up his futile task in despair. A superficial glance over barrels of apples would lead us to say that all were very much

the same; we would be impressed by the law of similarity. But a more careful view would lead us to see that each separate apple has its own special color and shape; we would be impressed by the law of variety. There are no two trees that are just alike; closer than that, there are no two leaves on all the trees of the world that are just alike. God has so much respect for individuality that He does not violate the law of freshness even in the tissue of the small leaves. If we would learn to take God's material mercies more carefully and seriously, we would soon see that they were new every morning and fresh every evening. When our eyes become keen and we train our minds to see the sharper distinctions, we shall find that the world will not tire us by its seeming monotonies. It is a new world on which we look to-day. We never saw the world as it is now; we never shall see just such a world again. The gifts of God's hand are new each morning. The fresh touches of the divine handi-

work are in all the fields and on all the trees and over all the dome of the sky.

If a man counts that companionship is a mercy, he will find that here, too, God has made provision for endless variety. We may return here to the figure of the stream, this time placing a human life upon its banks. William Canton gives this "Brookside Logic" from his child's lips:

> "As the brook caught the blossoms she cast,
> Such a wonder gazed out from her face.
> My, the water was all running past,
> Yet the brook never budged from its place!
>
> O, the magic of what was so clear!
> . I explained. And enlightened her? Nay—
> 'Why, but, father, I could n't stay here
> If I always was running away!'" *

Yet in truth that was what the child was ever doing—staying, and yet running away. A new child had come forward with this weird remark. This is what makes the child so interesting. How entrancing it is to see the newness that keeps moving in upon the

* W. V., "Her Book," p. 88.

developing life! How each new way or word fixes our attention!

The world of humanity offers us the study of many types. It is a suggestion often made that there are no two faces in the world that are precisely alike. All men may have eyes and noses and mouths and ears, and may possess in common certain general features; yet it requires but little care to discover to the observer that every man has his own physical individuality. To the superficial observer men become monotonous; to the close looker they offer such an interesting variety that companionship with them never grows wearisome. The so-called peculiar man is always an object of attention. When we learn that in the good sense every man has his own peculiarities, then every man seems a fresh social mercy sent to elicit our interest. Men and women never cease to grow; each year they take on change in one direction or another. It may be upward until we see the light of the heights

shining on their faces; it may be downward until we see the shadow of the depths creeping over their brows. The change is ever a matter of interest, though one may thrill and the other appall us. And there are no two minds that are alike. Given two men and the same subject upon which they are to speak, and you will always get a different form of language and a different line of particular thought. No two persons think just alike. There may be decided agreements; but differences of sentiment will surely appear even in the most congenial lives. There is no picture gallery in the world as interesting as the mass of human faces seen in real life; there is no library in the world that offers such possibilities of wisdom as the study of the minds of men. To one who has a social heart man presents a limitless field of research, a field with wide stretches unexplored and calling the kindly investigator to the reception of mercies which are new every morning.

As it is with individual men, so is it with the larger human movements. There is a familiar quotation to the effect that "history repeats itself." The phrase has its meaning; yet if one is to hold language to any accuracy, it is more nearly correct to say that history never repeats itself. We make our study and we may find some resemblances; but along with these is the special peculiarity that we find in every time and in every movement.* We wake up every morning to a new day in the world's history. The world has had but one Protestant Reformation, but one American Revolution, but one Spanish-American War. We are ever learning the lesson that God thrusts upon nations even as upon men new problems and new responsibilities, so unlike any that our country has known before that it is small wonder that we tremble and are sobered in their presence. If a man wants variety, let him note the new issues of these decades.

* Watkinson, "The Program of Life," p. 27.

If we have felt that we were suffering from historical monotony, where is the man who does not see enough variety in the present situation to make him keep his eyes wide open? One morning we are saying to ourselves confidently that two great nations will not go to war at this stage of civilization; the next morning one-half of the Spanish fleet is lying at the bottom of the sea. One month the Filipinos are our allies; the next day they are our enemies. One year we are in our battles and our papers are giving large space to the proceedings of war; the next we are watching the proceedings of the Conference of Peace and our papers are giving space to the deliberations of the pacific Round Table at The Hague. One day we hear the guns of Russia and Japan sounding about Port Arthur; the next the whisper of peace comes from the council on the New England Coast. One day the Sultan sits serene in his authority; the next the Young Turks are knocking violently at his door and

demanding more than a fictitious constitution. If a man be interested in human movements, he will not complain now because "that which hath been is and that which is to be hath already been, and there is nothing new under the sun." If events are the messengers of the divine mercy, surely then the divine mercies are new every morning. To the man who believes in God and believes that amid all the jar of human opinions He is working out His wise designs, there is nothing tiresome in the contemplation of the present time. The King of heaven and earth moves on to His infinite victory; the campfires shine daily from different heights; the tramp of the army is heard on different continents. But if the God of battles moves forward to the performance of His mysterious wonders, then surely it may be said of the divine mercies, "They are new every morning."

It is even so with the mercies of truth which God is always revealing. One of the

greatest thinkers of all time, whose mind had explored for many effective years the regions of knowledge, said in the midst of his intellectual conquests that he felt as if he were a little child picking up pebbles on the shore while the great ocean of truth lay out before him still. It is a suggestive figure, and it is small wonder that it has won for itself frequent quotation. If we do not know that God has new mercies of truth to make known to us each day, it is because our souls have been blind to a thousand sights and deaf to a thousand voices. As the man who is in love with the material world finds that a new glory covers the fields each day, a new brightness shimmers each night in the stars, new viands wait to satisfy his appetite, and new blood throbs through his veins—so the man who is in love with higher revelations will find that every morning there is a new foot on the floor and a new face at the door. But the mind must bow its welcome and seek acquaintance. In any normal morning men

will find that the mercies of truth are new. Nor does it seem as if we would soon exhaust the resources of knowledge and all our lives come down to the monotony from which naught can be taken and to which naught can be added. Every morning God gives us a chance to know more. If we do not know more to-morrow morning than we know to-day, it will surely be our fault or our misfortune. When we have come to the place where the mind seems as important as the body, where we put as much emphasis upon knowledge as we do upon food, where ignorance seems as dreadful to us as hunger—we shall find that in the higher realm God's mercies are never stale. His truth breaks fresh upon the mind with each new day; the book of life opens to another page, and it is our privilege to spell out some new lesson.

Thus is it too with character. If mercies consist of the things which are good and which may be appropriated after due effort, then the possibilities of character are new

every morning. To-day we have all faced new opportunities for growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. It is only the man of spiritual pride that will not feel that the hours offer to him a new spiritual chance —a chance to be more like Christ when the sun goes down to-night. It must be that we fail to see the significance of this line of mercies so freely offered to all men. Each morning comes with this invitation: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." This is simply the call to accept the divine mercies of character. Every morning is alive with that opportunity. If we do not see these mercies it is because we are blind. Ah! What unconquered regions of kindness

lie before our souls! What unexplored fields of benevolence! What untried paths of consecration! These are the possibilities that God sets before us now. To-morrow morning should see us nearer to our ideal, and to-morrow morning should see us setting out on the stubborn and courageous march toward our ideal. The height and breadth and depth of the love of Christ give us an ambition equal to the efforts of an eternity. At this point "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." "The measure of the fullness of the stature of Jesus Christ"—what growth to the spirit does that offer suggest? If a man will open the eyes of his soul and behold the wondrous things that God presents to him each day, he will utter these words in their highest spiritual meaning, "Thy mercies are new every morning."

Finally, God's mercies of work are new every morning. However monotonous our

round of toil may be, God varies it constantly with new opportunities. Each day is a fresh chance to do something for Him and for His. If we look into the same faces that we saw last week, they have yet been changed by a week of growth. We shall be called upon to give them a new lesson from God's book, and that lesson will make its new appeal to their hearts. In reference to the things that we may accomplish, God's mercies are new every morning.

His mercies are new every morning! How thankless we have been through the months! His mercies are *new* every morning! How blind we have been! His mercies are new *every morning!* How monotonous we have made our lives when God has intended that each day should come as a fresh gift from His own hand! Every morning! Every morning! The morn which awakes us to gladness and cheer and keeps surprising us with messages of success! The morning that awakes us to sorrow and gloom and

keeps pursuing us with words of defeat! Thy mercies are new every morning! At the end of every day we may repeat verses from that old hymn:

"This day God was our Sun and Shield,
Our Keeper and our Guide;
His care was on our weakness shown,
His mercies multiplied.

Minutes and mercies multiplied,
Have made up all this day;
Minutes came quick, but mercies were
More swift and free than they.

New time, new favors, and new joys,
Do a new song require:
Till we shall praise Thee as we would,
Accept our heart's desire."

When each dawning day in our lives sends the greeting up to God, "They are new every morning," life will cast off all its monotony, our hearts will banish their ingratitude, and Christ will rule in love!

III

THE THANKFULNESS OF A PSALMIST

THOUGHFULNESS AND THANKFULNESS

TEXT: *"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."*—PSALM ciii, 2.

THERE is an old poem which represents two angels as being sent forth from heaven to earth. The duty of one was to collect petitions; the duty of the other was to collect thanksgivings. When they returned from their mission each seemed to be embarrassed:

"The Angel of Petitions bore a sack
Cram full, and tied uncouthly on his back;
Yet even then it seemed that he had lack
Of bag or basket.

"The Angel of Thanksgivings blushed to feel
The empty lightness of his mighty creel;
'But three!' he muttered, turning on his heel
To hide his basket.

"Then spoke St. Peter: 'When again you go
On prayer-gathering, you will better know
That men's petitions in the world below
Fill a big basket.

"But when you go to gather up their thanks
For prayers well-answered and forgiven pranks,
For health restored and disentangled hanks,—
Your smallest basket.'"

Now, the poetry is not great, and the charge against humanity is exaggerated. None the less the New Testament records that ten lepers were cleansed, while only one returned to give thanks. The definition which says that "gratitude is a lively sense of favors yet to come" may be offered as humor; but it has its serious side. It has been said by some one that our custom of offering thanks before the meal rather than afterward represents a wider attitude, and that we are all prone to receive the gifts and to forget the Giver.

And there is enough truth in the charge to make us thoughtful and careful. We must confess the necessity of frequently exhorting

our minds to remembrance. The psalmist's proclamation to his own soul is not out of date. It is the meaning of our President's proclamation, and of our governor's. The whole call may be focused into these words, "Forget not all His benefits." Indeed, the appointment of an annual Thanksgiving Day is itself an admission of our tendency to forgetfulness. The ideal thing would be to have every day filled with gratitude. The special day is intended as a spur to thought and as a reminder of our much-neglected duty. Perhaps, then, we can not better use the hour of the message than by putting the question, What obscures gratitude and why are we so apt to forget the divine benefits?

The general answer is: Simply because we are not thoughtful in regard to the source of benefits. It is an interesting fact that the word "think" and the word "thank" were in the Old Anglo-Saxon language substantially the same. It may even be that the word "thank" is the past tense of the word

"think," just as "shrank" is the past tense of "shrink." The connection of the two words is, at least, intimate, and the relation of the mental and moral states which they signify is as close as the etymology of the words would indicate. Thinking must always precede thanking. Forgetfulness and gratitude can not live together. Thanksgiving, like other forms of life, dies in a vacuum. Yet it must be recognized that the text is not a call to the impossible. Its statement is happily negative—even though in another sense it is decidedly positive. We are not told to "remember all His benefits." Who would be equal to that task? Rather are we told, "Forget not all His benefits." There is something modest and reasonable in the demand thus made upon the soul. We shall consider some of the particular phases of duty of thankfulness.

There is, first of all, the thoughtless spirit which regards benefits merely as *matters of course*. God's mercies are new every morn-

ing and fresh every evening, and their very regularity may seem to render gratitude monotonous. An American clergyman gives a unique interpretation to the statement that "Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." His suggestion is that the garden of the Lord concealed the Lord of the garden. "God and Adam were on opposite sides of the trees. The creature swallowed the Creator. The gift rubbed out the Giver."* However true this version may be to the account in that early chapter in Genesis, it certainly has a just correction for modern life. Men who recall the scanty Christmas tokens of their own boyhood, and then behold their children playing carelessly amid the plethora of gifts, must often wonder whether the children appreciate the much as they themselves appreciated the little. As life grows richer we may become more dependent upon its gifts, and yet less appre-

* "Three Gates on a Side," Parkhurst, p. 70.

ciative of its gifts. Unless we are heedful, the more the garden blooms the less will we think of Him who makes it bloom. The leaves and flowers come between us and the Maker. The constancy of God's gifts conceals God.

Our ordinary blessings are, after all, the very richest that God gives. Yet they are likely to be least appreciated. A Christian man has a habit of saying to his friends who greet him with the words, "Fine morning, is n't it?" "Yes! You and I could not improve upon it if we were making it, could we?" It is a proper lesson in natural theology. It is an every-day way of glorifying God. Say what the philosophers will, the argument from design will not die. The world is fitted to our needs; and there is a message in that fact. That total fitness is a gift. We breathe the air; but we may forget that the air is a gift because the air is so faithful. We open the window, and the life-sustaining current rushes into the room. It presses

upon us with eagerness and seems to crave the opportunity of meeting our needs. Yet it is so easy to take it as a natural part of our physical heritage for which no gratitude need be given.

It is even so with sunshine. We step from our homes in the morning and see the sun touching the earth and sky into radiance. For ages that same sun has been shining, calling forth the grasses of every spring, painting the flowers of every summer, and ripening the fruits of every autumn; and still it shines upon the world with undiminished bounty. But the sun is ever in the service of man, and we have become so accustomed to that service that our appreciation is tame. Emerson said that if the stars came out only once in a century men would rush from their houses, look up into the skies, and adore. We allow the constancy of the stars to blind us to their beauty. Herein is a parable. We need not marvel that the Bible makes both sun and star symbols of the good God.

All this will disclose to us that form of forgetfulness which receives many gifts as matters of course. A ritual that has grown up through centuries of custom prescribes a form of thanksgiving before partaking of food. But Charles Lamb is quite serious when in one of his "Essays of Elia" he suggests that we should say grace upon other occasions as well. He says: "I want a form for setting out upon a pleasant walk, for a moonlight ramble, for a friendly meeting, for a solved problem." * Why not? Riley writes:

> "For the world is filled with roses,
> And the roses filled with dew,
> And the dew is filled with heavenly love
> That drips for me and you."

Theology can not stop short of that cheerful and thankful faith. If God is real, He means all this, and more. Therefore, we must cultivate thoughtfulness. Science has been telling us about the immanence of God. We may well carry that doctrine to its splen-

* "Essays of Elia," Lamb, p. 157.

did conclusion. When we have done so we shall cease to forget "all His benefits," and we shall not allow the constancy of God in giving to account for our lack of constancy in thanking.

There is a second type of thoughtlessness which regards God's gifts as *matters of desert.* He has made us co-workers with Himself even in the lower responsibilities. Just as the little child in aiding its parent often thinks that its tiny hands are carrying all the load, so do older children sometimes deceive themselves. We construe our partnership into a loneliness of responsibility and so into a loneliness of credit. We feel that we must look out for our own interests, and sometimes we congratulate ourselves that we do this quite successfully. We look at the home and say: "That house represents years of my labor. It is the result of my industry and economy." We look over a well-supplied table and say: "I worked for this food. It is spread in answer to my honest toil."

We look at our stocks and bonds and say: "This wealth was gained by years of earnest effort. I deserve credit for my success and fidelity in business life." So runs our story of self-satisfaction. If we dwelt upon the human side in fixing our responsibility as much as we dwell upon it in determining our credit, what mighty workers would we become!

Let it be conceded that there is something of justice in these self-congratulations. But the view is one-sided. Under any religious theory of the world man is helpless without God. When Jesus said, "Apart from Me ye can do nothing," His word went further than the first thought indicates. God is evermore speaking this truth to men. We need not hesitate in bringing the word down to the details of life. There is an old theory, called the theory of "continuous creation." The idea is that God is always creating the world. His fiat goes forth every moment. The light shines now because He says, as in

the sublime poem of creation, "Light be!" Yonder tree stands in strength because God creates it in each infinitesimal point of time. There must be a certain truth in this old theory. At any rate, it draws near to this faith —that men and things depend upon God for their being and for their continuance.

When we get this conception our praise of self suffers a large discount. Then man looks again at his house and finds that all the materials of wood, stone, and iron came from the hand of God. He looks again at his table and finds that the attractive coloring of the fruit and the appetizing flavor of the viands represent a gracious plan for exciting and satisfying man's pleasure. "God giveth us richly all things to enjoy"—this language states a fact about God's work and a fact about God's motive. The truth may apply to inner faculties as well as to outer benefits. The successful financier is perhaps most prone to felicitate himself. Still there is quite as much ground for supposing that the

faculty of making money is an endowment as there is for supposing that the faculty of making poetry is an endowment. We say that the poet is born, and not made. It may be even so with the maker of money. The word to the Israelites in Deuteronomy viii, 18, may have meaning for an individual as well as for a nation, "Thou shalt remember the Lord God; for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth." We have no warrant for assuming that one kind of faculty is God-given and that another kind is self-acquired. All faculties alike reach back to God, and all alike depend upon man's faithful development and use of native powers. Whichever way we turn we must confess our partnership with God. Our largest desert grows out of a diligent and reverent use of His help. When a man measures the reach of his own powers, and then notes how many things come to him from realms utterly beyond that reach, his view of life is affected with humility. At Thanksgiving he comes

"To see our Father's hand once more
Reverse for us the plenteous horn
Of autumn, filled and running o'er
With fruit, and flower, and golden corn!"

Over against the gifts of God in the world he finds the gifts of God in himself. The inner strength meets the outer opportunity, and they match each other. Thus does the sense of dependence join the sense of desert; man ceases to thank himself alone and goes forward to thank God.

The sense of gratitude is frequently obscured by our tendency to make the divine benefits *matters of comparison.* It is easy for us to find persons who seem to be more favored than are we. Even if, in a general way, we may be in better conditions, we may observe some single regard in which they surpass. That one item of superiority may crush out of our hearts the spirit of gratitude. The cure here is not to compare ourselves with our supposed inferiors in fortune or character. That method may develop an

unworthy pride. Perhaps it is possible for us to see the misfortunes of others and to thank God more for our own fortunes. But danger lies here; the process does not seem quite generous. Besides we may wrongly imply that the other men are not equally in the care of God.

> "That loss is common would not make
> My own less bitter, rather more:
> Too common! Never morning wore
> To evening, but some heart did break."

Even as the sorrows of others offer a poor solace for our lesser sorrows, so do the sorrows of others offer a doubtful inspiration for our own thanksgiving.

But it must always be legitimate to contrast ourselves as we are with ourselves as we might be. A boy once went with his father to visit a great-uncle. This uncle was an old man and had for many months lain upon his bed enduring nameless pain. Beneath each of his eyes was a cancer; he was

totally blind. The boy was not used to sights of suffering. His memory still holds a vivid picture of the invalid's pinched and deformed face. But more vivid than the memory of his face is the memory of his words. Tremblingly the old man said, "I can not see you; but, thank God! I can hear you." He was grateful for the social avenue that still lay open between himself and his beloved. He was a genuinely devout man. In the room of pain and darkness he found cause for thankfulness—a cause that grew more emphatic in view of the Scriptural assurance that God sets affliction to work for man until it brings glory of an exceeding and eternal kind.

The like thought applies to our station and work. As long as a man feels that his life of toil is good enough to keep he must have reason for gratitude. If he comes to the divine and human view that the lowliest occupation gives full opportunity for the de-

velopment of the highest thing, he will grow toward the feeling that

> "The narrow hall expands and spreads
> away into a kingly palace;
> The roof lifts to the sky and unseen
> fingers work
> The ceiling with rich blazonry."

It ought not to be considered a piece of foolish ideality that led some one to put these words upon the lips of a "lobster man:"

> "Aye! it 's lobsters here, an' it 's lobsters there;
> An' it 's cryin' lobsters everywhere.
> But I 'm never worryin' whatever I do,
> For I know the Lord is helpin' us through.
> An' one should n't complain when one knows
> he 's a share
> In the Lord's good love an' the Lord's kind
> care.
> So I cry my lobsters an' earn my bread,
> An' I count my blessin's each step I tread,
> For there 's allus this thought wherever I go—
> The Lord is leadin', keep follerin', Joe."

We may not all have a faith like this; but we will all quickly confess its blessing and peace. The humblest man with that view-

point can find positive benefits in his station and work. The gifts of God always lie in the place of duty.

Closely allied to this is the forgetfulness which considers benefits as *matters of exception.* By this is meant that we often fail to regard disaster as exceptional as it really is. Joseph in his duty as interpreter said to Pharaoh, "And there shall arise after the seven years of plenty seven years of famine, and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt." There is a revelation of human nature here. One year of famine doubtless attracted more attention than had the seven years of abundance. Ere twelve months of drought and disaster had passed, Egypt was full of murmurings. In that respect the land of the Mississippi is like the land of the Nile, the man of the modern time like the man of the ancient. You may enjoy good health for ten, twenty, or thirty years, and then be compelled to endure an illness of ten, twenty, or thirty days. The years of

health may leave your memory, or, if they remain, they may suggest only a disquieting contrast for your present condition.

There is something unfair here. Health has been the rule, sickness the exception. Why should we feel and act as if all this were reversed? Should the exception so fill our hearts with complaint as to crowd out praise for the rule? Years ago there was published the Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff, a young Russian artist. The book was most interesting as showing in a frank way the spirit of an ambitious and vain girl. In this Journal she states that for one month she had heard nothing but compliments. Hundreds had praised her paintings; but one day a critic appeared. The one voice of fault sounded louder than the thousand voices of praise. The exception led her to forget the rule, as she herself confesses.* We all know this mood in our relations with men; and we all know, too, that it works into our re-

* "The Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff," p. 149.

lations with God. Even where our misfortunes and our sicknesses may be traced directly to our violations of God's law we unconsciously ask that miracles may be done for us. Where troubles come upon us from points beyond our fault or control we may allow them to hide the benefits that come to us from points beyond our worth or control. Will a man rob God? Aye! Often the robbery consists in withholding justice rather than tithes!

This leads to the observation that we do not discern God with sufficient clearness in the ordinary events of life. It is natural that rare and startling occurrences should seize our thought and insist on special recognition. When danger advances within an inch of our lives and then recedes, we are driven by fright into gratitude. We feel the awful tremor of the earthquake, and we see the black devastation in the wake of the fire. Beyond those acres of havoc we ourselves have rushed to safety. We may not be dog-

matic. But we can surely go so far as to say that, while the so-called special providences should not call for less gratitude, the every-day providences should call for more. All this is well illustrated by an incident related by Gail Hamilton in her book entitled "Stumbling Blocks." Two men were riding together along a road. The horse of one stumbled and fell. The rider was cast violently to the earth, but was not injured. At once he turned to his companion and said with warmth that it was a great mercy on God's part that he had escaped harm. "But," his friend replied, "I have greater reason to be thankful; for my horse did not stumble at all." * This homely incident finely illustrates the greatest secret of gratitude. If we are saved from swift and awful danger we are ready to give earnest thanks; if we are not exposed to danger at all, the duty of gratitude may not occur to us. After earthquake, fire, pestilence, and panic we de-

* "Stumbling Blocks," Gail Hamilton, p. 164.

voutly praise God that we have escaped disaster. Would it not be just when earthquake, fire, pestilence, and panic have *not* come at *all,* to give God our heartiest thanksgiving? This year the earthquake has not come to the city.* Let us thank God! This year your horse has not stumbled in the journey. You should thank God! The steadiest witness of God's loving care is not our occasional rescue from peril, but rather our normal joy and safety. The divine goodness is the atmosphere in which we dwell. When our eyes are fully opened we shall "see His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with us!"

The conclusion is that gratitude is the natural path to God. The Scriptures often present this thought. The divine "goodness and mercy" led to the psalmist's resolve that he would "abide in the house of the Lord forever." We are told that the "goodness of God should lead us to repentance."

* Preached in San Francisco, Thanksgiving, 1908.

It is "by the mercies of God" that we are besought to present ourselves unto Him. No joy of life is complete without a note of thanksgiving. To whom shall we render our gratitude? We can not thank men simply; for so many of our benefits flow from a source higher than men. We can not thank a dead order of nature; for gratitude addressed to laws and principles is meaningless. But we *must* thank; and our thanking must reach an object. When the spring comes and invites us to a concert of praise, and mother Earth seems to awake her children from their long sleep, that they may go forth to laugh and romp all the long day of summer, the believing heart must find God. When the fall comes with the sober glory of foliage, and when mother Earth, knowing that it is evening, calls her weary children back to her bosom and puts them to sleep for the winter night, we must go to Him who promises that seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and

winter shall not cease. Gratitude is the natural and sure path into the presence of God.

Life is a gift. The earth is a gift. The capacity for enjoyment is a gift. Free grace is of many kinds. Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above—even from the Father. Therefore, when a man looks along the path of a gift he always looks upward. The gifts are so many that the ascending paths become like bewildering, and yet gracious, mazes. But each path ends with God; and the man who sees commands himself to gratitude by this old imperative, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

IV

THE THANKFULNESS OF A PROPHET

THANKSGIVING FOR THE COMING ORDER

TEXTS: *"In that day this song shall be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."*—ISA. xxvi, 1.

"And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee."—ISA. xii, 1.

THESE are the songs of the man who thanked God for the coming order. Thanksgiving usually deals in retrospect. The word "remembrance" is a natural companion for the word "thanksgiving." Already many of us have sent our minds back along the path of the year, that we might find here and there evidences of God's goodness. We search the record of the past, and in that record we find God. We are all historians to-day. We bind together the documents

that have been preserved within our own memories. In the completed chapters we find cause for faith. We spend our years as a tale that is told; at different points of the story we get glimpses of its meaning. At such points we thank God.

But there are uncompleted chapters in the tale. All of you have brought into this service plans that have not yet been wrought out. Accomplishments may be many; but visions are more. This is true in personal life. We do not live in the present alone. It is ever a sign of maturity that it holds in view the long run. Children are always ready to exchange a big future for a small present. For a gilded toy or a swift hour of pleasure they will mortgage all sorts of distant gifts and events. But directly they see the folly of short-sightedness. Each life has its coming order, and that must be held in mind. Four years may be taken out of the period of wage-earning in order that intellectual and moral preparation may be

sought for the future. It is an hour of tragedy for us when the future loses its attractiveness. As long as the heart can say, "It is better farther on," life keeps its relish. If our faith finds God in the past, that is much. If our faith finds God in the future, that is even more. Every man should carry within himself the thanksgiving of an historian; and every man should carry within himself the thanksgiving of a prophet.

The same thing is true in social life, as expressed in various institutions. The statesman said of Massachusetts, "The past, at least, is secure." That was a reason for gratitude. Yet the heart of a great State would not have been satisfied with that alone. There is a sense in which every man may be said to be a Hebrew prophet. He dreams of a social future. He tries to secure that future by his faith and work. Watch his conversation, and you will note the recurrence of the words "some day." "Some day" this will be; "some day" that will

come to pass. Now, the Hebrew prophet had just such a phrase. It is repeated again and again in the Book of Isaiah. Probably two score of times we read of what will happen "in that day." "That day" is out yonder. Occasionally the prophet saw "that day" so clearly that he broke out into thanksgiving. He praised God for what was coming. There are two moods in the Book of Isaiah, whether there are two authors or not. "That day" is the burden of the early part of the prophecy. Light and darkness are set over against each other. This day of imperfection is contrasted with "that day" of perfection. Amid the hard conditions the prophet finds comfort in the bright prospects.

It is often said that the Hebrew prophet was a forth-teller rather than a fore-teller. There is something of truth in this poor play on words. The prophet was not a fortune-teller in the ordinary meaning of the term—even as it applies to nations. His aim was

not to satisfy the greedy curiosity of the people concerning the coming time. Probably we have blundered in trying to work small details into his meaning. But he knew God; and he knew the moral order. Give those terms of knowledge, and much more follows. Right attitudes toward God and the moral order would inevitably carry a people in a certain direction; wrong attitudes would just as inevitably carry them in the opposite direction. Even as in individual cases we are able to prophesy with accuracy the moral and social goal, so in national cases we may do much the same. The process is longer and more complicated; but the rule is quite as assured. The glib unbeliever may say that God is on the side of the heaviest battalions, and in particular instances his remark seems correct. Yet the long run of history comes forward with another lesson. God is never very long on the side of a bad nation, even if it does have the heaviest battalions. The bad nation directly loses its

heavy battalions. A drunken nation pawns its valuables in the markets of the world just as surely as does a drunken man. The transaction is a longer one, and he who can not see the far tendencies may be deceived. When Rome gets an unsound heart she is on the way to dissolution; when Israel gets an unsound heart she is on the way to captivity; and when America gets an unsound heart she will take the road to destruction. It was this trend that the Hebrew prophet saw—and he saw it vividly.

But he saw the other side of the law; and he saw the other side of men. He believed in God; he believed in God's law; he believed in men. In a real way his glorious prophecy concerning "that day" was a tribute to human nature. The coming order was based on the faith that God was good, and that eventually God would have good men to co-operate with Himself. Often we say:

> "Truth crushed to earth will rise again;
> The eternal years of God are hers."

We may imagine that our faith is solely in God and in God's truth; but our faith is likewise in men. We know that truth will rise only when men lift it up; and we confidently believe that men will do that very thing. Truth does not work automatically; it works humanly—that is, through men. It becomes incarnate. The charge has been made that the Christian religion does not respect human nature; but the charge is far from true. Our religion has such respect for human nature that it is forever prophesying the day when that nature will co-operate with God in the perfect life. The Hebrew prophet hurled terrific charges against humanity; and yet his long faith in humanity was superb. The figures that moved in the glory of "that day" were not the figures of angels; they were the figures of men. All our visions of the coming order are splendid compliments for humanity. It is small wonder that the prophet praised God for the coming people. The whole creation waits and groans

for the revealing of the sons of God; and the social order waits for the same revelation. The prophet always believes that the sons of God are on their way hither, and he hears their marching over great distances.

Even though the government of Israel and that of our republic are different, there are some true parallels between the confidences of the two peoples. Israel clamored for a king; but she never shook herself free from the ideal of a theocracy. In the last analysis a perfect democracy will be a virtual theocracy. Men say that the cure of the evils of democracy is more democracy. Just now the slogan is, "Back to the people!" The cure of the evils of democracy is more democracy—provided only that the more democracy is better democracy. The problem is twofold: to have the rule of the people, and to have the right sort of people to do the ruling. The splendid thing about democracy is its trust of the people. Disappointed over and over again, that trust

persists. Republics rise and flourish for a season; then they die. They tell us that they have usually lived about two hundred years, and that then the throne of the people falls. All this makes it but more significant that humanity still believes in democracy. We speak of "the land of the free and the home of the brave," even when we know that we are talking ideals rather than actuals. The enslaved are with us yet; and the cowards are not all buried. Yet still do we look for the coming order. We see the time when men shall work with God for each other. The Hebrew prophet arises within us and heralds the era of peace and righteousness. Some may say that the faith is blind; but nearsightedness is not full sight. There are still men who are blind because they can not see afar off. The true democrat must be credited with a most worthy faith in humanity. He sees this day with its evils; but he sees "that day" with its perfections. He ventures upon the theory that men will

yield to the inner rule of Christ, and so bring the outer rule into harmony. He joins Edwin Markham in the song, like unto that to be heard in the land of Judah:

> "And social architects who build the State,
> Serving the Dream at citadel and gate,
> Will hear Him coming through the labor hum,
> And glad quick cries will go from man to man:
> 'Lo, He has come, our Christ the artisan—
> The King who loved the lilies, He has come.'"

The man who lives with that Dream can not stop short of thanksgiving. He will be grateful for the God who works with men, and grateful for the men who work with God.

This prophet's faith was not daunted by the vision of perfect social order under the rule of God. He saw a redeemed city, and that is about the hardest thing for any man to see. Where human population, and so human expression, masses itself, the problem grows more intense. The moral feeling of great centers so often resembles the moral feeling of a mob. A mob is the most piti-

less thing on earth; the madness of many seems to be focused in one spirit. The law that makes righteousness kindle in the great congregation until the hope and longing of all other hearts in the assemblage take strong hold upon each heart, has its baneful side. This is seen when deliberative bodies go wild; and it is seen in its most virulent form when multitudes give way to a common gust of passion. But when that law shall have its chance to work with the right men, the city should become the best place on earth. Then truly can we say, "We have a strong city." The "mob-consciousness," as the sociologists call it, will be converted into a brother-consciousness. It is a far cry to "that day;" but he who really sees its coming can engage in a prophet's thanksgiving.

Nor are there wanting evidences that we are moving steadily, however slowly, toward "that day." It is easy to mistake revelations of wickedness for increase of wickedness. The first effect of the revelations is

that people deem their times degenerate, whereas the revelations may be tokens of the real improvement. If insurance frauds have flourished for many years and now stand exposed, the exposure may be the sign of the better day. If graft has gorged itself on the city life and is now tried and punished, the prosecution may be the proof of the city's betterment. The overturning of the stone and the letting in of light does not create the slimy things that scurry for another cover. The word "reform" is in the air. Candidates use it as a political rally-cry. Reform governors are appearing in various States. Reform mayors enter the contests in our cities. If the critic shall say that the candidates are using the good word as a key to public office, we may well be glad that the time has come when the word is so popular! Even this speaks of a growth of moral feeling. Men feel to-day that we are having a purified passion of citizenship. We shall have our reactions, it may be; but

the movement is onward. When private citizens give lavish sums for civic improvement; when a whole nation watches with keen interest the contest for reform in each center; when the people press the city-reformer on to the governorship of a State, and then, it may be, into the Presidency of the nation—the signs of the times indicate that "that day" is a little nearer. For this we may thank God.

But the danger is that the movement shall not be grounded in the human spirit. The Hebrew prophet saw afar, and he saw "adeep." He knew that "that day" could come only as God wrought in the souls of men. Judaism was not the narrow thing that we have often described. It gathered "all nations" into its heart. Jerusalem was to be the joy of the whole earth. The kingdom of righteousness was to come by an inner process. The favorite outward symbol of its coming was the disappearance of coarser weapons and defenses. In the second chap-

ter of Isaiah we see the weapons vanishing under that gentle edict that moves from God's house: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the law from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." So did the prophet see the weapons disappearing in the fires of the forge to come out as tools of a productive life.

Here in the text the prophet sees the

defenses vanishing. The walls fall down; they give way to a spiritual substitute. Some one said recently that we needed now "a moral equivalent for war;" Isaiah found a spiritual equivalent for one of the defenses in war. He reversed the code of his age. Instead of saying, "We have a strong city; walls will we appoint for salvation," he said, "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." He foretold higher protections that have now been realized. Babylon and Jerusalem were surrounded by high walls; New York and London are open on every side. The modern cities are far from perfect, and the civilizations which they typify are not perfect; but something has taken the place of walls and bulwarks. The salvation is by no means complete; yet the prophet's vision seems not so far away. The trade of war will disappear. Even now the main argument for a large army, and especially for a large navy, is that their presence will tend to preserve

peace. Their needfulness is seen in the fact that they may make themselves needless! The logic that abolished dueling is sure to abolish war. The poet sees "that day" as well as the prophet, and Longfellow in "The Arsenal at Springfield" joins with Isaiah:

"Down the dark future, through long generations,
The echoing sounds grow fainter and then cease?
And like a bell, with solemn sweet vibrations,
I hear once more the voice of Christ say, 'Peace!'

"Peace! and no longer from its brazen portals
The blast of war's great organ shakes the skies!
But beautiful as songs of the immortals,
The holy melodies of love arise." *

The path leading to that final peace is righteousness. The prophet keeps true to God's order. The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable. The righteous nation enters the city; and then God keeps it in peace. When Jerusalem lost her righteousness the triple walls did not save her. Her feeble soldiers surrendered the city with-

* Household Edition, p. 79.

out a battle. The city that conquered Jerusalem was in its turn to show that walls and bulwarks were not enough. Babylon's walls were fifty-six miles in circumference, three hundred feet high, and so wide that eight horses could be driven abreast on the heights. For all that the city had her last night of terror and slaughter. How strange that it takes the world so long to learn the lesson that salvation is a real wall and a real bulwark! Years ago one of our great cities found out the prophet's meaning, even though it did not think of the prophet's name. It became hostess to the national convention of a young people's society. Between fifty and sixty thousand young men and women invaded her streets and thronged her hotels. They talked and sung of salvation beneath two mighty tents and in all the churches. The city was captured by the Christian spirit. The newspapers filled their columns with glowing accounts. Thieves ceased their pilfering; bullies ceased their fighting; drunkards ceased

their excess; and the chief of police reported an absence of crime unequaled in many years. The city had the higher protection against the lower dangers. Salvation was appointed for walls and bulwarks. An atmosphere did what the weapons of policemen and the walls of prison had not done. The gates of the city opened to a righteous people that kept the truth, and the city was given peace.

In his great volume on "The Book of Isaiah" George Adam Smith declares that "true patriotism is the conscience of our country's sins." He says: "All prophets and poets of patriotism have been moralists and satirists as well. From Demosthenes to Tourgenieff, from Dante to Mazzini, from Milton to Russell Lowell, from Burns to Heine, one can not recall any great patriot who has not known how to use the scourge as well as the trumpet."* All this is true. Nor can one recall any great patriot who

*p. 39.

did not hold the conviction that his nation was charged with some vast service, and that in season that service would be rendered. Here again the Israelites and the Americans resemble each other. As the Jews believed that they had a mission for the whole earth, so have we believed that our country was to be one of God's instruments in bringing in "that day." This is the meaning of the Statue of Liberty in the harbor of the East. We may sometimes offend other peoples by the grandiloquent way in which we make our claim; and we may not always seem to leave room for other nations in the plan of God! Still that conviction has its justice. If God be the God of nations, He has assigned us our proportionate part in working out His vast social design. The way forward is a way of righteousness. "Righteousness exalteth a nation." It does more. It saves a nation; and it preserves a nation's mission. After all, this is the true exaltation. For that vision of our country's life we may

be grateful. So on this holiday we may thank God for what He has wrought in our past by the work of noble men; and we can thank Him, as well, for what we believe He will accomplish by the services of a Christian citizenship.

One of the mountains of the great West gives a striking picture which devout men have been quick to use as an illustration, even if they do not take it as a sign. We have all heard of the Mountain of the Holy Cross. Two immense gulches intersect each other like transverse beams. The hand of God, working with the tools of earthquake and frost, has made yawning spaces between the rocks of the hills. In the winter season the snow fills the gulches and is packed solidly into the depths beyond the reach of the warmth that melts. The spring comes. In other places the snow yields to the heat and trickles down into the valleys. But long after the tops of the mountains have shed the white covering the unmelted snow shines

in those vast creases. Through all the heat of summer and of autumn that gleaming cross remains upon the height, shining before the eyes of travelers like an open box of diamonds. It is small wonder that the Christian patriot seizes upon the symbol and turns it into a prophecy. The Cross of Christ is to be stamped upon our land; the Cross of Christ is to be stamped upon the hearts of our people. We greet each other with the prophet's thanksgiving; we greet our country with the prophetic song:

"Our thought of thee is glad with hope,
Dear country of our love and prayer;
Thy way is down no fatal slope,
But up to freer sun and air.

"With peace that comes of purity,
And strength to simple justice due,
So runs our loyal dream of thee.
God of our fathers! make it true."

V

THE THANKFULNESS OF THE SAVIOR

THE COMPLETE THANKSGIVING

TEXT: *"And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee."*—JOHN xi, 41.

IF Christ is to be the leader of our moods as well as of our actions, it would seem wise to make a study of His thanksgivings. At this season of the year we are apt to turn to the Psalms and adopt their praises as our own; or it may be that we turn to the writings of Paul as representing the higher and more spiritual types of gratitude. From these sources we have drawn help, and our hearts have been stirred into keener appreciations. But if we have one Perfect Exemplar, why may we not go to Him to learn the lesson of gratitude? Why shut ourselves in with the lesser lights when the sun is shining and we may walk in its radiance?

This question is so natural, though so surprising, that we wonder why we have not asked it before and oftener. We have made Christ our guide in meekness, in kindness, and in the purest kinds of joy; but we have not thought to consult Him in reference to the way of thankfulness. We have been grateful to Him on Thanksgiving Day, but probably we have never sought to be grateful like Him. He has been the goal of our gratitude rather than its guide, whereas He should be both guide and goal. Our adoration of the Teacher will be but more fervent if we really learn His lesson. We shall only praise Christ the better if we keep our holiday in His praising spirit.

Doubtless our failure to come to Jesus for the lesson of thankfulness grows out of the failure of our religious teachers to lead us in that sacred direction. Centuries ago Thomas à Kempis wrote his "Imitation of Christ;" you will search its pages long ere you find any word that tells us to imitate

Christ in the mode and mood of our thanksgiving. Not many years since James Stalker wrote his "Imago Christi." In that book we study the concrete example of the Savior in relation to the home, the Church, society, work, suffering, controversy: but we find no chapter about His gratitude. We turn to the section on "Christ as a Man of Feeling," hoping that there the expression of His gratitude will be set forth for our instruction. We look in vain. We find a discussion of His Compassion, His Sensitiveness, His Indignation, His Delicacy, and His Modesty; we find no treatment of His Thankfulness. But the Bible is an open Book, and some lessons lie upon its surface for the seeing heart. So we may go on an independent search for the Savior's instruction on the subject of Thanksgiving.

What, then, do the writings tell us concerning the thanksgiving of Jesus? The revelation is not a long one; but it is complete, and we shall find crowded within it a

proper leadership for our feeling. The universal quality in the teaching and living of Jesus is often pointed out. It has a certain evidential value and makes an appeal of its own kind. This quality appears in the principles set forth by the Master. It was manifestly impossible that He should give detailed instructions as to conduct. In such a case the Gospels would have grown to fearful bulk, becoming tomes rather than handbooks. In addition, men might have become slavish followers of rules rather than vital exponents of great principles. Yet the teaching of Jesus, by word and act, touches the center of all life. It is singular that those who most vehemently indict His followers do not indict His instructions. More often they use His instructions to place His followers in an unfavorable light. The principles of Jesus are universal.

The like thing has often been said of His temptation. However one may construe that series of pictures, it is a true drama of life.

All human temptations may be classed under the three heads. The assaults made against the will of Christ exhaust the possible approaches of evil. If one should care to say that the story of the Lord's temptation was an invention, he must allow that the inventor had a shrewd and comprehensive insight into life. The universal quality is in the account.

Do the thanksgivings of Jesus likewise have the characteristic of the universal? Do they go out in all the possible directions of human gratitude? If so, they must deal with the physical, the social, the intellectual, and the spiritual. They must suggest all the channels through which the joy and goodness of life flow in upon man's nature; and they must not stop short of that communion with God for which the heart of man is made. A study of Christ's thanksgivings will reveal again this universal mark. We do well to take them in the apparent order of their importance and so apply them that

we may be constrained to follow Christ along the path of gratitude.

I. The first case of public thanksgiving that we find recorded of the Master was called forth by the presence of material blessings. A great company has followed Him into the region beyond a lake. The sun has set: and the people, now that the exciting day has closed, become aware of their hunger and faintness. He had compassion on them and was making ready for the most dramatic of all His miracles. The thousands are seated upon the ground and are looking with wondering eyes at Him who prepares to be their host. They hear the conversation of the Master with His disciples; then they see one of His closest friends lead forward a lad who carries in his hand a wee basket. Jesus took the food from the child, five loaves and two fishes. Before proceeding with that marvel and mercy He bent over the humble fare and "gave thanks." We need not now discuss whether His thanksgiving was for the lim-

ited food provided by the child, or for the unlimited food that was to move forth from the divine power, or for both. In any case, He gave thanks for material food. He thus set the example that has been so widely followed through the Christian centuries, and offered thanks for physical benefits. All four of the Gospels record the miracle; all four, likewise, record that its Author looked to God in gratitude. We have thus our Lord's example for offering thanks for those gifts which supply the needs of our bodies. In this respect we shall do well to follow His leading.

While it is both wise and pious to have the upward look of heart before partaking of our food, it may be that we do not give a wide enough significance to this particular form of giving thanks. It ought to be the occasion for bringing to our thought the benevolent relation that God holds to the lowest wants of life, the blessed moment when we recognize that food, shelter, cloth-

ing, and all kindred gifts come from Him. Trace the history of any article upon the board and it leads you in the end straight to God; there is no stopping-place short of the Infinite Hand and the Infinite Heart. Each portion of food has its story of divine ascent. Babcock's verse does not state it too vividly:

> "Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,
> And back of the flour the mill;
> And back of the mill is the wheat, and the shower,
> And the sun, and the Father's will."*

Follow up the path down which any physical blessing has come, and you can not stop until you reach God. Reverently and rightly, therefore, can we follow Him who held in His hands the five loaves and the two fishes, and who thanked God for physical blessings.

Now, this first lesson is in accord with our own idea of thanksgiving. We have put the festival day at the close of the harvest

*"Thoughts for Every-Day Living," p. 167.

time, when the fruitage of the field has been gathered into the granaries and the year reaches its climax of benefit. Judged in comparison with the deeper blessings, physical benefits may be of little consequence; but judged alone and as essential phases of the life that now is, they bulk large in the list of blessings. If he is material in his sense of life who does not rise on Thanksgiving Day above the thought of the harvest, it is just as true that he is only partial in his gratitude who does not see that material blessings must be worthy of our thanksgiving since they were worthy of the thanksgiving of Christ. Here we may safely follow our Lord's lead.

The gifts for which the Savior gave thanks represent a vast area of divine power. The loaves have their history, and we do not stop until they have taken us to the field where grows the grain, to the skies whence fall the showers, to the sun whence comes the heat. Ere we have done with our study we find that

those barley cakes have an alliance with all the powers of earth. The fish have their history, and we do not stop until we see the stream, the river, the lake, the sea. Ere we have done with our study here, we find that those small products have an alliance with all the world of waters. If the giving of thanks at our meals could frequently get this sweep of outlook, it would soon lose all formality and would move onward into the Savior's spirit. Therefore, at this season let us come to the mountain side and see the Lord as He gives thanks for physical blessings. Then let us thank God for food, for raiment, for shelter, for the beauties of earth, for the glories of the skies, for that ceaseless care which extends even to our bodies and allows joy to enter through these lower channels of our being. For it is written, "And He took the loaves and gave thanks."

But if we are to follow Christ fully we must go higher than this. We pass now into

a more intimate scene. This time the Savior is not with the multitude, but rather with His disciples alone. We go into an upper room, away from the noise of the streets and fields. We enter the circle of discipleship. The Master and the twelve have just finished a meal; they have called it the Passover. At its close the Lord arises and, taking in His hand bread and wine, He again gives thanks. In this there must be a meaning different from that noted in the previous instance. "When He had given thanks, He gave it unto them." How often have we heard those words as we have come to the Lord's table! Why did Christ give thanks here? Was it for physical blessings again? It could not have been merely this; for the physical things now were being used as emblems. Christ then must have given thanks for that which was signified.

It is singular that the action of the Lord has frequently given the name to the Holy Communion and that we often speak of it as

the Eucharist or Thanksgiving. Was Christ giving thanks for the fellowship symbolized by that ancient feast? It must have been so. He rejoiced that there were those to whom He had come close enough so that they would remember Him and would bring His remembrance to countless others. His vision must have swept down the years until it embraced the communion of all saints, until He saw those who would kneel at many altars in solemn renewal of a covenant of eternal friendship with Himself. Small wonder is it that He gave thanks when He instituted the Holy Supper! It was a sign of the sacredest and highest association, the emblem of what He was willing to do for those whom He loved, and of what they in their turn were willing to do for Him. So when material things were transferred into signs of fellowship Jesus gave thanks.

Without seeking to expound the "fellowship of the mystery," let us still hold to the nearer end of this great truth. We can

well thank God for our associations. If we were to be deprived of all those who have been near to our lives in the year gone, isolated and left only to ourselves, how much of life's joy would die? We have had our fellowships and friendships; we have been in the communion of those who have understood and loved us; we have taken bread from the hands of those who would make sacrifices for us—even from the hands of some who would die for us. It may be that we have known the yet dearer joy of breaking bread with those for whom daily we gave our lives and for whose good we were glad to pledge all our powers. In this case we can rise, as did Christ at the founding of the Communion, and give God our thanks.

We can see quickly how this second instance of the Savior's thanksgiving fits into our thought for this season. Thanksgiving has become the festival of the home, the holiday of more intimate communion. In being grateful for the inner circle of those who

share our thoughts, carry our griefs, exult in our joys and successes, we move near to the Savior's spirit when He offered thanks before the institution of the sacrament of fellowship. We have thus a holy precedent for the gratitude and fellowship that shall fill our hearts on each Thanksgiving Day. If you can still look into the face of your mother in filial communion, you may well thank God. If you can still have your father's blessing, you may well thank God. If you can speak to wife and child and know the joy that completes itself in parenthood, you may well thank God.

This gratitude can go beyond and above the earth. If you believe that those who have departed have only passed into the shelter of the Father's house, still may you be grateful. When Whittier wrote his "Snow Bound" he spoke of one who had gone within a year, and writes thus gratefully of his memory and his hope as if he pierced the veil and stood again face to face:

"And yet, dear heart! remembering thee,
Am I not richer than of old?
Safe in thy immortality,
What change can reach the wealth I hold?
What chance can mar the pearl and gold
Thy love hath left in trust with me?
And while in life's late afternoon,
Where cool and long the shadows grow,
I walk to meet the night that soon
Shall shape and shadow overflow,
I can not feel that thou art far,
Since near at need the angels are;
And when the sunset gates unbar,
Shall I not see thee waiting stand,
And, white against the evening star,
The welcome of thy beckoning hand?" *

Thus we may follow Jesus in being grateful for our nearer associations, grateful for the joy that flows in upon us from our domestic and social circle. For it is written of the symbol of communion, "When He had given thanks He gave it unto them."

III This carries us to the third instance of the thanksgiving of Jesus. In one Gospel the context indicates that He has heard the

* Household Edition, p. 290

victorious report of the Seventy as they have returned from their journey. He sees that His disciples have gotten hold of life's deepest and sublimest truth and have set it to effective work. Then He thanks God that the way to truth is open and catholic, saying: "I thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

Stripping this language of what is negative or modifying, and stating the positive meaning only, we have this thanksgiving, "I thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast revealed these things." It is a pean of revelation. The words are not an indictment of proper wisdom and prudence in the search for truth. They are rather an attack upon a certain spirit of self-sufficiency that gets in the way of truth. Jesus viewed truth as one of God's realms. As the way into the spiritual kingdom was

through the gate of humility, so the way into the intellectual kingdom was through the same gate. The lowest truths are revealed to the open mind; the highest truths are revealed to the open mind. When, therefore, Christ pays tribute to the spirit by which men reach the truth, He pays tribute to the truth itself. The road is glorified by the destination to which it leads. When we speak well of the Appian Way our compliment is for Rome.

As Jesus thanks God for revelation, so does He thank God for the human spirit that makes revelation possible. And as He was universal in His nature, so do we find a universal touch in His reference here. He does not give thanks for a limited aristocracy of intellect, but for a democracy of spirit that brings truth near to all men. Revelation flows most readily to the childlike, to those who are simple and trustful in their approaches, to those who are willing to ask questions without fear of betraying their ig-

norance. The Seventy had seen some things which the mere scholar had not seen. They were to be the founders of many schools, the advance guard of hosts of learners. More than this, in their simple fashion they had won for their minds and hearts certain great conceptions that were to defeat the world-systems of their day and were to make new empires and even a new world.

We may well follow Jesus in His thanksgiving here. How much less life would mean if there were no truth to gain; if there were no mind to receive; if there were no open way to the deepest and highest knowledge, save for a cold and critical intellectuality! How poor would life be if it crawled to its food each day and knew only that it depended upon coarser bread alone! How low and degrading would life's associations be if they expressed merely the instinct of the herd and had no exchange of the truth! But every place on earth is a room in the school of God, and the true

scholars are those who, putting aside conceit and prejudice, wait to hear the Teacher's voice. We may well thank God that we have caught some of His revelations in this past year, for the larger meaning that has come to the world through them, for the increase that has been thus granted to our own natures, and for the finer, steadier character that has been given us because we were humble disciples in the Master's College.

Especially can we be grateful if we have been simple and trustful enough to accept the truth as it is in Jesus. The greatest truth comes by humble faith. The mystery of our faith is just as great to the scholar as it is to the child. Indeed, it may appear to be even greater; for the child may grasp it all by trust and may walk where the scholar will stumble. Who are promised the vision of God? Those that are wise of mind and versed in the lore of the world? Not so! "The pure in heart shall see God." Who shall know of the doctrine? Those that

study theology and spend the years in applying mere intellect to religion? Not so! "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." The real saint is a very sure person.

Jesus thanked God that the doors of purity and obedience stood open. Within the one is the vision of God's face, within the other is the growing certainty of God's truth. Is it not right that at Thanksgiving time we should thank God for the simplicity and accessibility of every real gospel of life, whether revealed in God's world or in God's Son? May we not join with Christ in this form of gratitude, saying: "Father, I know but little. Mysteries are thick about me. I can not reach Thee by wisdom and prudence. But Thou dost come to the humble in heart. I thank Thee that in my purest moments I see Thee most truly, and that Thou dost reveal Thy truth and Thyself to one who wills to do Thy will!"

Yet we must not stop here. In the first

instance we have reached God through material blessings; in the second instance we have reached Him through the hearts of our beloved; in the third instance we have reached Him through the revelation of His truth. But if we are to be most truly grateful we must come to God in immediate relations. We must approach until we stand face to face with Him.

IV Here we come upon the final case of the Savior's thanksgiving. He has prayed at the grave of Lazarus. The onlookers stand in amazement and expectancy. "And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me; and I know that Thou hearest Me always."

This was gratitude because the way to God was open, and the door stood ajar, and within was the listening Father. Now, what a cause of thanksgiving is here revealed! We have been grateful that we could find God's gifts to our bodies, that by our industry, and patience, and skill, we have been

able to appropriate physical blessings to our lives. We have been grateful, too, for the gifts to our social natures, for our friends who are deeply interested in our welfare and whose fortune is all bound up with our own. We have been grateful for God's gifts to our intellectual natures, for that wide free way that leads to the realm of truth. But have we been grateful that we can reach God, that He is near and waits to hear our call? Have we followed Christ in this higher thankfulness, saying, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me; and I knew that Thou hearest me always?" If we have failed in this, surely we have been thoughtless indeed. For can you think of anything that calls for more gratitude than just simply this: God is always within hearing distance, always within helping reach, always responsive to the approach of love?

And how near this final form of the Savior's thankfulness comes to our holiday! For what is the meaning of this prescribed

feast? Is it not that God does hear? What use to speak to Him and say that we are grateful for His mercies if He pays no heed to us? And if God hears us when we tell Him of our gratitude, does He not hear us when we tell Him of our need? Does not this Thanksgiving Day in the last analysis of its meaning teach us that we may share this mood of gratitude with Jesus and say with Him, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me?" We shall all see to it that the day brings us face to face with God. In some of its precious moments let us push aside the physical gifts, push aside the social joys, and let us come immediately to Him who waits to hear our cry and to be gracious to us all. For it is written: "And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me."

VI

THE THANKFULNESS OF A PHARISEE

THE PERVERSION OF THANKSGIVING

TEXT: *"God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are."*—LUKE xviii, 11.

OUR minds feel driven to place beside this complacent word St. Paul's desperate plaint, which ends in simple gratitude: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The two texts would then represent the thankfulness of two Pharisees. One of these appears in a parable; yet to the world he appears a real figure. The other appears in a history so vast and influential that men long ago conceded him the title of the greatest man that has walked the earth since Jesus died on Calvary. The figure from the

parable and the figure from history make an effective contrast, considered from any standpoint; but the contrast does not lose meaning when the two are estimated by the spirit of their thanksgivings.

The fairness of placing a parable-character and a world-character over against each other in this fashion might be called in question. The critic would say: "Both parties in your transaction should be taken either from fiction or from history. Why mix imagination and fact in this thanksgiving contrast?" The reply is that the Pharisee of the Master's parable is, after all, a very real sort of a character. He is also very numerous. We meet him each day. The fiction of Jesus was always so true to life that His characters walk the earth still and seem to us as real as some historic personages. The Pharisee of the parable is etched quickly. Two or three strokes of the artist, and we see the pride of his face and the assumed dignity of his bearing. The

picture seems vital. Tone works into it; and we hear the voice of complacency. Men have discussed whether sound-waves could be detected in "The Angelus." However that may be, sound-waves may be felt in this parable. So remarkable an impression has it made on the world that it fixed for centuries the estimate of the Pharisee. Even to this day, when men would describe moral egotism and the spirit of soul-vaunting, they use the adjective "pharisaical."

In all this we are doubtless too sweeping —especially if we think that all the Pharisees were slaves to this spiritual conceit. Let us not forget that Nicodemus was a Pharisee; that his restless heart drove him to Christ, even though by night; that his sense of justice led him to take Christ's part against other Pharisees; and that he brought his tribute of myrrh and aloes to the burial of our Lord. Nor should we forget that Gamaliel, a doctor of the law and a teacher of deserved fame, was a Pharisee; that he

expressed his fine tolerance before the council of his colleagues and gave out his serene faith that God's truth can not be banished nor His cause overthrown; and that the force of brutality should not be used against the gospel of Christ. Jesus was never so unjust as to make a wholesale charge against the Pharisees; and we may wisely follow Him in this regard.

Still it must be said that this picture of the Pharisee in the parable represents to us the danger of any system that emphasizes outer conduct as prescribed by formal rules. As for the reality of the contrast in the two texts, we well know that Paul in one supreme moment of his life was represented by the publican in the parable. The spirit that asked humble questions just outside Damascus; that eagerly sought God's follower in the street called Straight; that gladly sacrificed position, pride of ancestry, and material good in order that the heart's cry might be answered—this spirit is closely akin to the

mood of the publican on the other side of the Savior's picture. So we do no violence to the truth of life if the Pharisee of the parable and the Pharisee of history, as glorified by contact with Jesus Christ, become servants of a Thanksgiving warning and lesson.

It is difficult for us to define clearly just what was wrong with the Pharisee who said, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are." He offends us decidedly. Yet his offense is so subtle that we find it hard to put it in plain terms of indictment. We can not say that he lied to God about his conduct. He was not an extortioner nor an adulterer. Probably he did fast twice a week, and he gave his tithes with exact conscientiousness. He told God the truth about his outward life. For all that we do not like him. Nor can this be because Jesus puts him at a disadvantage, making him a villain in a spiritual drama. The Lord nowhere questions the truth of his claims. The parable does not end with harsh words even

about his spirit. He did not go down to his house "justified;" and he was "abased;" this is as far as the lesson takes us. Somehow our estimate of this Pharisee seems to be so much worse than anything that the parable says about him. We reach a judgment without seeing all the path that brings us to the judgment. Even after we review the processes by which our hearts get their conclusion, we feel no reason for changing our opinion; and the Pharisee still stands under condemnation.

All this suggests a rather forbidding subject for Thanksgiving Day. Our first impulse is to ask, "Is it possible that men can enter the temple on such a day as this and utterly pervert the spirit of thankfulness?" The parable says "yes," and so do many actual scenes that we have beheld and actual experiences that we have had. Thanksgiving is subject to such temptations as attack praying. Selfishness may invade the room in which we pray. We might be surprised if

we could review the petitions of our lifetime to note how many of them were for ourselves, and even for our lower selves. "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your own pleasures" —this is a statement about the possible perversion of prayer. We would naturally suppose that the spirit of prayer would purge the heart of selfishness. So it would, if it were only guarded; but there is careless praying. There is likewise careless thanking. The note of self which appears in a prayer for help may likewise appear in a prayer of praise. As the one may be a plea for self, so may the other be a tribute to self.

It is just at this point that the Pharisee of the parable offends us. The record puts it, "Prayed thus *with himself.*" It is a neat and pointed statement of the situation. The name of God was on his lips, but his own name was in his heart. Under a pretense of thanking God he was really thanking himself. In this general view we get the fact

that the holiest moods may be perverted. Every great virtue is so nearly related to some great vice that the distinction between the two is not always easy. Stinginess and economy do not lie far apart. Conceit and self-respect sometimes look alike. Cowardice and prudence may be mistaken, each for the other. Deceit may claim the stamp of tact. The Pharisee did not know the border lines of moral feeling. Hence he mistook self-adulation for thanksgiving. He addressed God, but he ended with himself. He marched clear up by the throne of God in order to find the most complimentary way to his own soul. The name of God occurs once in his plea; his own name occurs five times. Even this numerical item does not represent the proportion of the two tributes—the one to God and the other to his own self.

God should be our standard on Thanksgiving Day. Whenever our praises are based upon comparison or contrasts with the characters or the lots of others, thankfulness

is on its way to defeat. This was the mistake of the Pharisee. He said "God;" and then he forgot about God and began to think of "other men." He placed his standard on the heights, and then he walked quickly downward to adopt a measurement out of the depths. Suppose that he had halted with the name of "God!" What humility and reverence would have seized him! Isaiah went into the temple, saw the vision of God, and cried out, "Woe is me!" This man went into the temple, spoke the name of God, and pronounced a eulogy on—himself! He did not make God his standard. Had he done so he would have felt the more grateful because he felt the more unworthy. The Pharisee should have stayed longer with God's name until his heart had learned its lesson. Instead he rushed on past that name, and his thanksgiving reached a pitiful anticlimax.

He went on to contrast himself with "other men." This is a dangerous proceed-

ing, as well as an odious one. If the men are above us, and our thought rests on them rather than on God, we shall be driven to discontent. If the men are below us we shall be driven to the heresy that God has made us His special favorites; or else we shall drop God's agency out of the transaction altogether. This Pharisee contrasted himself with an "extortioner!" Small wonder that he gloried in his honor! He contrasted himself with an "adulterer!" No marvel that he took pride in his purity! He leaped to the place of conceit. That was the natural goal of his method. He made men his standard rather than God; and he carefully selected men whose lives were blighted by the coarser sins. He looked upon the poor outward of "other men" rather than upward to God and then inward upon himself. It is possible for all of us to-day to fall into this perversion of thanksgiving. God is the end of Thanksgiving Day; He is also its standard.

But, as we have already hinted, there is something more of fault in this Pharisee's thanksgiving. His test was wrong; so was his ascription of credit. He did not see that the virtue in those rules that made for right living among the Jewish people came from God. The Jews had the oracles, but they were the "oracles of God." Kipling's "Recessional" speaks of the

"Lesser breeds without the law."

Whence came the law? From God! This Pharisee told of his own accomplishments. His mistake was not in telling a falsehood, but in failing to ascribe credit where it belonged. Because he did not fasten his prayer to God alone he missed the truth utterly. He fasted twice a week; but he never humbled his own soul. He gave tithes of all he possessed; but his praise of himself revealed toward "other men" a contempt quite out of keeping with a gentle and generous spirit. He said, "God, *I thank Thee;*" but that was

exactly what he did not do. We feel it as we watch the drama. The cheap poetry states it truly:

> "Two went to pray; or rather say,
> One went to brag, the other to pray.
> One stands up close and treads on high
> Where the other dare not lift his eye.
> One nearer to the altar stood,
> The other to the altar's God."

This man did brag, but he did not pray and give thanks. Schleirmacher once said that the sense of dependence was the basis of religion. The Pharisee, then, lacked the very basis. Humble dependence is not in his plea. It is a recital of personal virtues to his own credit.

George Eliot uses this sharp sentence: "I never have any pity for conceited people, because I think they carry their comfort about with them." We know well the feeling of this word. Yet it does not quite reach to the heart of our charge against conceit. We have the impression that the vain man vio-

lates the truth of things. He lies to himself about himself. While the Pharisee told the truth about his outward life, he did not know the truth about his inner life; nor did he give credit where credit was due. We get the impression that he used the name of God as a personal advertisement. The genuine use of that name always makes for humility. The people of New England for many years observed both a Thanksgiving Day and a Fast Day. Gradually the Fast Day lost observance; at length it was abolished. But the real message of the Fast Day can be kept in Thanksgiving Day. There is a sense in which Thanksgiving Day is a time of humiliation. It is a confession of our dependence. It gathers together all the joys and treasures of life, orders them into the temple, and forces the acknowledgment that they are the gifts of God. The Pharisee did not see this. He missed the point of a real Thanksgiving. Had he gotten the insight of the humble he would have added a prayer of

penitence to his prayer of self-praise and would have moaned:

> "Lord, forgive these words of mine;
> What have I that is not Thine?
> Whatso'er I fain would boast
> Needs Thy pardoning pity most." *

All this has its modern reference. Happily we are losing the old distinction between natural and spiritual goodness. All goodness is of God. The Pharisee of our time, who has much to say about his own virtues, usually is without the Church. He entertains the foolish idea that his goodness is of his own making. He has not heard distinctly the word of God to Cyrus, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me." The mood of Cyrus would have been different if he could have gotten that message fully. The truth is that many men here to-day have had the inner help of God all this year. If God helped us only when we thought of Him we would quickly sink back into our original

* Whittier, Household Edition, p. 282.

nothingness. If there is such a thing as a "natural disposition," God is its Author. The gifts of life all reach back to Him. The trouble with the moral man is not his morality. Far from it! The trouble is that he does not ascribe the credit for his morality to the proper party. There is a light that lighteth every man! If the moral men in these pews to-day could get a real understanding of themselves and of God, they would come to the most genuine Thanksgiving they have ever known. They would see that the inner gifts as well as the outer gifts come from the Father.

This was the revelation that came at length to Paul. He was a Pharisee. There was a time when he could have prayed like the man in the parable. One day there came a new conception. Something happened on the edge of that old city. Paul met Christ. Explain the dramatic accompaniments as you please, the heart of that transaction was spiritual. Paul's soul met the soul of Christ.

From that time on Paul knew that the right life consisted not in the following of outward rules and rituals, with the ever-felt but seldom-confessed sense that even the law could not be kept without some great inner dynamic. He knew that it was deeper than that —that it came from the power of an Infinite Savior working within his own heart to will and to do of His good pleasure. From the Damascus Road to the Appian Way, from his conversion to his death, Paul bragged no more. He made huge claims; but he made them in behalf of another. He did not say, "I can do all things." That would have been boasting. He said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." That was praise. He came to regard sin as a hideous corpse so fastened to life as to make its own horrible penalty. He sought for deliverance. He found deliverance. He broke out into thanksgiving, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

If we will search our own hearts on this

Thanksgiving Day we shall all allow that Paul's word can not be left out of this festival's meaning. In spite of all our miserable evasions, in spite of our twisted motives, in spite of our pitiable excuses, we know that Christian manhood is the best gift that God can offer. Could we feel to-day that we had lived a perfect year, speaking always the gracious word, doing always the good deed, thinking always the right thought, then would we know the thankful spirit. But confessing our imperfections, let us not fail to be grateful to-day for the higher gifts. There are some here who know what it is to be saved through Jesus Christ. One year ago you were walking eagerly the path that leads to the swine field. You were beginning to taste the woes that lie in the dregs of the wine cup. You yielded to the gospel of Christ. God gave you your freedom. Here you are in this service, with treasures of character demanding a pæan of praise to God. If any one shall say that this is not

better than added gold, we shall not argue with him. He who has felt the struggle within, the war of the soul, and who has come to peace, knows the inner thanksgiving and can say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

We should not, however, deceive ourselves by the use of an extreme illustration. The most of us have not known the power of the more brutal sins of appetite. Our spiritual victories have been in other lines. We may not have been sensual like the prodigal; but we may have been selfish like the prodigal's brother. We need not make contrasts that would seem to excuse either type of sin. On the other hand, we should feel the reality of wrong in both. If we have a more vivid sense of sin's calamity and a more passionate love for righteousness than we had a year ago, the God of the year has been good to us. He is giving us the deeper perspective. He is instructing us in life's values. In the final judgment, whether of

men or of God, all lower gifts will be seen as good only as they ministered to the deepest nature of men. Here now let us hear the seraphim cry out, "Holy, holy, holy." That cry will make us conscious of our unworthiness; conscious of God's goodness; and conscious, also, that God's best gift is conferred on the humble spirit. Thus shall we pass from the boasting of a Pharisee to the thanksgiving of an apostle. "Andrew Rykman's Prayer" shall have its answer both in heaven and on earth; the cry for help shall issue in the song of gratitude:

> "Thou, O Elder Brother! who
> In Thy flesh our trial knew,
> Thou who hast been touched by these
> Our most sad infirmities,
> Thou alone the gulf can span
> In the dual heart of man,
> And between the soul and sense
> Reconcile all difference,
> Change the dream of me and mine
> For the truth of Thee and Thine,
> And through chaos, doubt, and strife
> Interfuse Thy calm of life.

Haply thus by Thee renewed,
In Thy borrowed goodness good,
Some sweet morning yet in God's
Dim, æonian periods,
Joyful I shall wake to see
Those I love who rest in Thee,
And to them in Thee allied
Shall my soul be satisfied."

VII

THE THANKFULNESS OF AN APOSTLE

1

THANKSGIVING FOR HUMAN ASSOCIATIONS

TEXT: *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."*—PHIL. i, 3.

THIS sentence is characteristic of the great apostle. Its like is found in all the Epistles which he addressed to the scattered groups of Christians—save only in that to the Galatians. The statement has variations, of course—sometimes being accompanied by an assurance of prayers, sometimes by a list of the virtues which call for his praise, sometimes by a hint of that inner compulsion which drove gratitude into expression. Twice he declares to the Thessalonians, "We are *bound* to thank God always for you." But the central fact remains the same. Paul

thanked God for his human associations. Even this he did in a marked way. He did not speak his word of gratitude in privacy; he spoke his word so that the people about whom he spoke could hear. He told them in just so many words that he thanked God *for them*. He seemed to be addressing men and God at the same time. His thanksgivings had two goals. When he began to thank men he felt that he had to thank God; and when he began to thank God he felt that he had to thank men. In the case of the text he unites the two moods as if they belonged together; and he says quite simply, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

Surely it would be strange to omit from our reasons for thanksgiving the mention of our human associations. We may well thank God for the lower gifts to life. Our bodies demand food. The harvest comes. We use the gift of physical strength wherewith to claim the gift of food. The custom of Thanksgiving Day emphasizes this good of

life. A dinner has become one of its symbols. The charge is frequent that the table receives a surplus of emphasis on this holiday as well as at other times. The cynic will tell us that the announcement of refreshments will increase the attendance even at a religious gathering. From this he draws the conclusion that the best people are still moved mainly by the animal appeal. We should be careful, however, lest we fall in with this charge too readily. The truth is that a table is the world's great medium of sociability. We become really known to each other in the breaking of bread. If it were to be announced that silence must reign at the banquet, that friend could not converse with friend either by speech or by significant look, and that the feast was to be purely physical, the average person would move slowly toward the dull occasion. Analyzing our own motives and observing the motives of others, we shall conclude that banquet tables are valued chiefly because they give free-

dom to fellowship and make possible a fascinating closeness of social contact. Some of the most sacred utterances of our Lord were given as table-talks. It was even "after supper" that He took the bread and cup and instituted the perpetual Feast of His own remembrance. The table of feasting and fellowship is not without a high sanction. The grateful and temperate use of the custom of this Thanksgiving Day can plead the example of the Holiest.

But, more than this, the custom of the day becomes one of its symbols. Reading that symbol, we may be brought to give thanks for the lives that are nearly related to our own. Too often we make relationships spell responsibility alone, whereas they spell joy also. Utter aloneness would be the deepest punishment. This is the tragedy of imprisonment for life. There is social disgrace; yet as the years pass those who know of the disgrace become fewer. The penalty lies in being cut off from associations. "Sol-

itary confinement'' is one of the last menaces of the law. The world's turmoil is distant; privacy is complete; food is eaten in silence; ease is absolute; responsibility for others ceases! A pleasing prospect, this! No voice of man can fall upon your ear! No sight of human face can draw your attention! No printed page relates you to the world's strife and suffering! The walls are your only friends; they alone give answer to your words and make your tones fall back upon yourself in dismal rebound! You are shut up to your own society; you are your own only companion! Such a life has driven more than one man to madness. The experiment of such isolation would send us back to the eager renewal of our relationships; and we would consider the responsibility involved as a meager price to pay for the joy of comradeship. Poor, ignorant Friday is a wonderful gift when Robinson Crusoe has lived alone for a time!

But these illustrations do not show the

full value of association. Beyond the prison walls is a world of people; and beyond the horizon that surrounds the desert island the ships plow the sea. Some day that frowning gate may open; some day the hidden ships may come in sight. Our minds and hearts still relate us to others. We live by the hope of a possible reunion with our kind. Edward Everett Hale wrote of "The Man without a Country." He showed by a tragic process of elimination what it would mean to a human life to be fully cut off from its country. That convincing lesson in patriotism deals with but one form of our human association. Think what it would be to be a man without a country, without a home, without a family, without a friend, without an association of any kind! Van Dyke carries this thought on until he conceives a man outside of all relations. He has no parents; for, if he had, he would be related to them. He is not a product of matter; for, if he were, he would be related to matter. He has no

place in the world; for, if he had, he would be related to that place. He is not held in the thought of God; for, if he were, he would be related to God. He is simply a lonely fragment. He is a mere onlooker—nothing more. He sees a thousand persons, each fitting nicely into some relation to men and to work; but his only relation is the consciousness that the other people have relations, and that he himself is wholly superfluous, absolutely unnecessary to anybody's life. That would certainly be a frightful independence! The imagining of a being who is worldless, placeless, countryless, parentless, friendless, Godless, needless, will make us all thank God that He has made us for association. Our temporary absence from our usual associations sometimes brings this lesson to us. We learn it most keenly in the vast loneliness of a strange city. We behold the multitudes as they pass in the evening time, each one taking his way to some fellowship. But no group invites us. Like Riley's character, we

begin to long for "Griggsby's Station," where almost every neighbor was "just like a relation." Rose Hawthorn Lathrop has pictured the need of our human associations under these poetic figures of speech:

"A log won't burn alone!
The flame grows less, the hearth is dark,
Low sings the sap in crooning tone;
The room grows chill, and cold, and stark,
One's heart holds back as if to hark
For ghostly sobs and eerie moan,—
A log can't burn alone!

"A life can't glow alone!
The smile seems sad, the senses start,
The will lies useless, limp, and prone;
Unchallenged and uncheered the heart;
And one by one the stars depart
From all one's sky, to darkness grown,—
A life is death, alone!"

Even this most general description will make us feel that we must list our human associations among our reasons for thanksgiving.

But all this touches only the outer circle of life's company. There are still closer

circles of fellowship. It would be difficult to estimate what our acquaintances mean to us. They are not yet in our nearer confidences. But they affect our lives as we pass them, giving us cheer and adding to our pleasure. They become parties to our success, whether commercial, political, or professional. If our association were confined to our intimates, life might become very narrow. We have all known persons who belonged to a clique rather than to a constituency. These limited their own cause of thankfulness. From the circle of acquaintances we gradually gather about us a nearer and smaller circle still. These we call our friends. The cynic, who is, as the etymology of the word would indicate, the snarling dog of social life, may say that our friends can be numbered by the fingers of one hand, or he may express doubt as to the reality of any friendship. But those who have had the outgo and the income of friendship will not join in the skepticism. The proof of friendship is the ex-

perience of friendship. If we know that there are those whom we would serve in all gladness and with no selfish motive, the evidence lives within us. If we know, too, that there are those who pursue us with a loving interest, who are struck with sorrow when we are sorrowful, who are happier by reason of all our happiness, who for the decades of our absence cease not to place flowers upon our children's graves, the evidence reaches us from other hearts. When we think of such as these our minds can leave the fields and offices with their gifts of food or gold and can enter the room where heart meets heart and the higher commerce reigns. This will bring us to the place of St. Paul's thanksgiving, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

This day has become the holiday of the home. The trains bear to-day hundreds of thousands who are returning to the inmost social circle. Around the board reminiscences will be exchanged, fond news will be

given in barter, and lives will return to the fountain of youth for their own refreshing. Two men stood on a street one dreadful evening when the wind was howling fiercely. As they bade each other a hasty "good-night" one exclaimed, "My God, what a terrible thing it would be to have no home to enter now!" Even so! As a place of shelter the home means much; but as a place of sympathy and communion it means far more. Southey puts it justly in the words:

> "One small spot
> Where my tired feet may rest, and call it home.
> There is magic in that little word.
> It is a mystic circle that surrounds
> Comforts and virtues never known beyond
> The hallowed limit."

It is not the occasion for using the names of father and mother, brother and sister, wife and child, as appeals to mere emotion; but it is the occasion for lifting those names to the heights of praise. Take from us the recollections of home, and what fearful gaps

are made in the list of joys! Take from us to-day the refuge of home, and how vacant the world suddenly becomes! The home is of God's appointing. Those who can not read God's law in the constitution of society are blind. Is a law of less force when written in the flesh and blood, the love and hope, of human lives than when written on parchment or on stone? God made the home, and He is still engaged in the long education of man for the purity and unselfishness of domestic life. To-day we shall look into the faces of loved ones and shall indulge in happy converse at the board of plenty. We shall think of other faces whose smile greeted us in days of old. If our hearts be just and if they have learned to appreciate the preciousness of our closer relations, we shall gather the beloved, those present and those absent, into our thought, and we shall say with grateful fervor, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

This has brought us through the thought

that we should thank God for these human associations. But it has not yet made clear the propriety and justice of expressing our gratitude to our friends and loved ones. Paul, as we have observed, felt no sense of contradiction between the two goals of thanksgiving. He put God and men into one sentence of praise. The charge that we do not thank God often enough and fervently enough is doubtless true. It is likewise true that we do not thank men often enough and fervently enough. This holiday has its human meaning. One of our papers has printed this verse:

> "What silence we keep year after year
> With those who are most near to us and dear!
> We live beside each other day by day,
> And speak of myriad things, but seldom say
> The full sweet word that lies just in our reach
> Beneath the commonplace or common speech."

The accusation is true, whatever we may think of the poetry. This holiday would enter upon a real service if it could be used to correct this carelessness.

There are some things that explain, if they do not excuse, our failure to look the companions of life in the face and tell them that we thank God upon every remembrance of their relation to us. Peter in his general Epistle said that governors are set for the punishment of evil, and also for "the praise of them that do well." Governors do not often enter upon the latter function of their office. The official pen and ink would not be equal to the task. There is a sense in which our failure to commend is a tribute to the faithfulness of our friends. Life is so crowded with small services, and these are rendered so faithfully, that it seems quite impossible to keep on hand a sufficient stock of commendatory language. The constancy of benefit works here even as it works in our relation of gratitude to God. Men do so much for us and mean so much to us that adequate and regular expression is out of the question. Is not Thanksgiving Day a good season for bringing up arrears, with men as

with God? Comment is sometimes made on the fact that our set phrase of appreciation has been more and more abbreviated. In the old day it was, "I thank you." Later, says the critic, our faster life presumed that the "I" would be understood, and began to say, "Thank you." Still later we discovered that two words required excessive time and energy, and so we descended to the form, "Thanks." Our appreciation was left in the midair of speech as if it has no starting point and no goal! Perhaps our reform might begin by discarding the blunt and blank ritual and by returning to the simple dignity and fullness of expression, "I thank you."

We are hindered, too, by the fact that so much of life's service is remunerated by other coin than that of speech. The clerk has his wage; so does the pastor; so does the general; so does the President. Ere we are done with this consideration the circle of human appreciation is decidedly narrowed.

Every situation, however, has its moral and social bearing, and there are certain qualities that are never placed on ledgers or exhibited in the market. Arnold of Rugby had a salary; why should his students be grateful to him? Lincoln had a salary; why should a nation praise his service? Directly we shall be reminded that the private soldiers of the great war were paid thirteen dollars per month, and that Grace Darling's father received regular pay as a lighthouse-keeper on one of the Farne Islands! Such illustrations will show us that there is a social and moral side to service, for which no financial recognition alone is sufficient. A son's debt to his parents is never fully met when he has given them as much as they spent for his care and education, and has added thereto a fair estimate of the value of their time! The spiritual quality in service is like the grace of God; it is without money and without the cruder price. Yet are there deeper forms of appreciation in which our

debts can be partially paid to faithful hearts.

The fact that God desires our thanksgivings has its lesson for a human duty. The nature of God demands praise. Construe this fact as one will, it is significant. How often men say, "Praise the Lord!" We are prone to take the word as meaning something different from its ordinary significance. But the central fact abides: God craves praise. He is a Great Heart, and He is pleased by our appreciations. The psalmist says, "Thou art great and greatly to be praised." God Himself is represented as saying, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me." God needs praise because He is not some frozen abstraction unmoved by the warm approaches of His own. This Thanksgiving Day must mean that God is not indifferent to the response which we make to His benefits. Here we come straight upon our duty to men. Are they not made in His image? Are they not like God in this re-

spect: that they appreciate commendation and gratitude? The desire of men for the appreciation of their fellows is not a human weakness. It is a part of their divine likeness. If one should say truly that he did not wish that others should appreciate his character and his work, that one would show that he was in so far unlike God. The perfect Man said, sadly, "Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?" The meaning of this day comes down to earth, enters offices and stores, takes up its abode in homes, and does not do its perfect work until hosts have joined the apostle in this word of social thanksgiving, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

Our relations with God being mutual, this truth carries us in another good direction. God desires praise; God gives praise. We are like Him in our longing for appreciation; and we should seek to be like Him in our willingness to give appreciation. God is not a monarch, forever feasting upon the adora-

tion of His subjects. He receives, and He gives. He believes in the reciprocity of praise. Nor is He hindered by any of our superficial reasons for withholding appreciation. He gives His silent proclamation to each well-doer. Where faithfulness comes into our service, He gives the inner appreciation even though the outer wage be paid. He never seems to be afraid of making us vain; for always there comes to the honest worker the whisper of approval. We may halt at saying that God is ever giving thanks to men; yet a truth lies hidden in this clumsy expression. If we are not like Him unless we wish for just appreciation, it is equally true that we are not like Him unless we give just appreciation. He does not withhold His eulogies until men are dead; rather He scatters them all along the faithful days. After every honest task the still small voice says, "Well done!" Far out at the end of life He has erected a judgment seat. The prize that draws us onward and that will

satisfy all our hopes is that our lives may be crowned by the divine appreciation and that the fixed and final verdict will be His "Well done!"

St. Paul's gratitude was only deeper because those for whom he thanked God represented his own love and service. These Philippians had been led by him into the way of Christ. They were his reward, his joy, his glory. They were not gifts thrust upon him; they were gifts won by the grace of Christ. They were the returns on his own investments. Even as the husbandman works with God that he may gain the gift of the harvest, so had the apostle worked with God that he might have this fellowship in the gospel. His thanksgiving often takes this turn. He wrote to Timothy: "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day." A strange reason for thanksgiving! we are ready to say. He thanks the God

whom he serves that he himself serves another by intercessory prayer. Usually we thank the God that serves us for the man that serves us. But St. Paul turns gratitude right about face. He thanks the God that is served for the man that is served. In our better times we know the meaning of all this. If to-day we could see some man whom we had rescued from evil ways, and could behold him walking the way of righteousness and peace, we could thank God most fervently. Could we bring yet others into the company until those whom we had helped became a throng, then thanksgivings would crowd upon thanksgivings. We could look upon those whom we had brought into the better life and we could say most truly, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

Henry Van Dyke has a poem which represents the death of a man who had had beautiful dreams and high thoughts which no actual life could match. But he had post-

poned his good deeds, and now the end was pressing upon him. He recounted the things that he had not done, but that he would do if only he could have another chance:

"I 'll say the loyal, helpful things that make life
sweet and fair,
I 'll pay the gratitude I owe for human love and care.
Perhaps I 've been at fault sometimes—I 'll ask to
be forgiven,
And make this very room of mine seem like a little
heaven.

"For one by one I 'll call my friends to stand beside
my bed;
I 'll speak the true and tender words that I have left
unsaid;
And every heart shall throb and glow, all coldness
melt away
Around my altar-fire of love—ah, give me but one
day!" *

This Thanksgiving Day God gives for such a human purpose. He will be pleased if we shall take the meaning of the holiday and apply it to His children—to those who are

*"The Toiling of Felix and Other Poems," Van Dyke, p. 61.

so much like Himself that life has more joy when they receive appreciation. Their joy will be richer if we can tell them that they are the Lord's gifts to us and can repeat to them this apostolic word, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

2

THANKSGIVING FOR INNER STRENGTH

TEXT: *"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee."*—2 COR. xii, 8-9a.

THIS is the holiday which calls us to recount God's benefits. Our tendency is to put the stress upon certain outer events or gifts. Even though we recognize the primacy of the spirit, the body makes its clamorous demands. Its needs are of the open and dramatic sort, so much so that it is ever easier to make appeal in their behalf. San Francisco and Messina do not wait long for supplies for the body; nor do those stricken by earthquake, fire, and tidal wave fail to respond with earnest gratitude. But sup-

plies for the higher life come more slowly. In spite of our lofty intent we must often confess ourselves guilty of materialism. This is not so much because our theory of life is astray as because the needs of the spirit lie more or less hidden. It is not so easy for many men to see the reality of the hunger and thirst after righteousness as it is for them to see the reality of bodily want.

This type of blindness as to life's deeper needs naturally shows itself in relation to life's deeper gifts. The fact that this Thanksgiving Day comes at the close of the harvest season should not, of course, lead us to assume that Americans care more for the fruits of the earth than they do for the fruits of the spirit. Any such sweeping indictment needs to be guarded. Yet perhaps a personal review of your feelings, as you have approached this holiday, might not be spiritually flattering. Upon what gifts have you put the emphasis? Do you thank God at the

table oftener than you thank Him at some spiritual altar? Have your thoughts thus far this day dealt mostly with gifts that are imparted directly to the soul? These are questions that probe to the center. They give us this day's revelation of ourselves.

St. Paul suggests a direction in which we may look for a deeper form of gratitude. The thought is an old one; but it has special significance for the Thanksgiving season. Had the apostle confined his search to his body, reasons for gratitude would have been offset. He would have remembered pains that racked and limitations that fretted. He might have recalled hours in which he agonized. But St. Paul had a peculiar way of fleeing to a spiritual refuge. He did just that in this instance. Finding disorder in his body, he moved up into his own soul. There he found the grace of God. So did he come to ascribe glory and give thanks. Let us note the splendid reality of the apostle's gratitude.

Were it not for the fact that we are all moved by a greater or less element of curiosity, it would be easy for us to smile as we see others prying into insignificant questions. St. Paul had a way of keeping things to himself. He passed through a spiritual experience, concerning which he said nothing for fourteen years; and he passed through a physical experience, about which he never gave any details. His splendid reticence seems to have piqued commentators and Bible readers into an eager curiousness; and much time and effort have been spent in labored attempts to gain Paul's secret and to find out what "the thorn in the flesh" was. The many theories advanced are in themselves evidences that the inquiry is vain. No one knows what Paul's affliction was. Some have said that it was a deformity of personal appearance! Others have held that it was a case of weak eyes, aggravated and made chronic by the blinding light that shone above the Damascus road! Others, again,

have supposed that it was an impediment in his speech which greatly hindered his public work! Yet others have held that it was a tendency to epilepsy which kept the busy apostle in constant fear! And still others have held that the energetic missionary was subject to nervous prostration—in which case he would surely have many modern sympathizers!

This list by no means exhausts the suppositions that have been brought forward. Any one of them may be true; or they may all be false. Our ignorance gives us the wide advantage of general comfort to all sufferers rather than the narrow advantage of special comfort to a class of sufferers. With the record as it stands, we are not likely to lose our thought upon *one* kind of affliction. This much, then, and only this much, do we know: Paul was compelled to endure a grievous and bitter weakness. It weighed heavily upon his heart and impeded his work. He prayed with earnestness that this "thorn in

the flesh'' which kept pricking and tormenting him might be removed. A second and a third time he offered the same petition. But the wearing pain did not cease. The thorn did not depart; nor did it lose its sharpness and its sting. Yet it would be farthest from the truth to say that Paul's prayers were disregarded. Nor would it be correct to affirm that he received only a reflex benefit from his petitions. Paul's prayers were heard; Paul's prayers were answered. Instead of paying heed to the plea by removing the thing, God paid heed to it by renewing the man. Instead of changing Paul's thorn, God changed Paul's spirit. You will at once see how suggestive this is. Paul had said: ''O Lord, let this buffeting thorn in my flesh depart. It worries me. It interferes with my happiness. It hinders my work. I beseech Thee, remove it.'' But the divine answer was: ''No! The thorn shall remain. But you yourself shall be strengthened. I will pour My help in upon your life, and I will

make you strong enough to endure your hardships." This was the answer; and how divine it was, and how glorious the effect upon the life, we will all do well to observe and appreciate. The time came when the apostle thanked God for the deeper gift of grace and for his power of spiritual resistance.

The divine method adopted in St. Paul's case is still used. More doubtless than we are in the habit of thinking. God is answering our prayers, and so calling for our gratitude, not by removing our difficulties, but by making us equal to them. This idea must be many times forced upon us all. It must often come to us in connection with our own circle of friends. Our minds go up and down the streets and stop at various houses. We find that there are not many, perhaps indeed none, in which there is full freedom from some serious affliction. To be sure, the joys are in the larger portion, and our prayers would be more appropriately charged with

gratitude than with petition. But, after all, the most of the homes bear a difficulty, a trial, a sickness from which they would gladly be delivered.

In most of these cases our friends have prayed that the trying thing might be removed. Once, twice, thrice, yea, many, many times they have said: "O God, lift this weight. Remove this burden. Cure this sickness. Drive away this trial." But the weight, the burden, the sickness, the trial, have not departed; it may be that they have increased in heaviness and bitterness. But applying the matter to you, who are in this Thanksgiving service, it may be justly said that you have been patient and courageous. In your patience and courage may be seen God's answer to your prayers, and your own reason for gratitude. For this thing you have prayed the Lord that it might depart from you. But He has said, "My grace is sufficient." This is not simply a Pauline experience; it is a Christian experience. It

is as frequent and effective in this year as it was in the year 60.

Yet for all this it is true that our superficial thought and desire are apt to prefer the method of removal. Sometimes this method seems so much the simpler, and the solution so much the easier. Why not have the thorn out and be done with it? Why endure the fret and torment through the months or years? The answer, in most general terms, is that while we are prone to put emphasis upon happiness, God puts the emphasis upon character. Undoubtedly the ideal of many men would be a world from which all evil and difficulty would be banished. But the ideal of God is a world in which men will be able to resist evil and difficulty. We put the stress upon *things;* God puts it upon *men.* Paul's desire is to have the thorn subtracted; God's desire is to have the manhood added. These contrasts state the two methods and give us fully the thought of the apostle's language and experience.

Our poor dreams, however, are very persistent. We all have our thoughts of a perfect world. Such perfection is quite likely to consist of a full freedom from grave difficulties. As it is now, matters often seem to be strangely out of harmony. The coal that we need for heat is buried beneath the mountains, and we must work in darkness and damp in order to release the black servant from its prison. The soil that men need for the production of food is pre-empted by vigorous weeds and so mingled with rocks, stones, and roots that we must ever with plow, hoe, and rake fight against its stubbornness. The lumber that we need for the making of our houses resists with its toughness man's attempts to use it, and submits only when men compel it into service. Even the gracious rivers hinder man's progress, and he must labor hard to make a bridge; for natural bridges are few.

Seeing that there is need of such great labor, it is scarcely astonishing that we

should be struck with surprise. Why is not the needed coal more accessible? Why is not the soil more tractable? Why is not the lumber more manageable? Why do not bridges made by the divine hand span every hindering river? Why all the strange difficulties? But think a moment! Are we not laying all the stress upon things—accessible coal, tractable soil, pliable lumber, ready-made bridges? We can conceive that some dreaming enthusiast should pray: "O Lord, remove these hindrances. They impede our work. Give us an easier chance. Then shall we be truly grateful." But we all feel fairly certain that the prayer would be unavailing as to its direct purpose. God would answer: "My grace is sufficient for thee. You want a continent without a desert, a stone, or a weed. I want men with industry, with resources, with inventive power. I want accessible men, tractable men, pliable men, natural men."

It is thus evident that the methods of God

are not in harmony with our superficial thought of things. And there is, at any rate, just enough of difference in the conditions of men to give us a vital proof as to the effectiveness of the divine plan. Everywhere men must enter into something of a struggle with unwilling nature. But this struggle varies in its intensity. Where the climate is severe, without being fierce and overpowering, there do we find the most capable races. It is easier, and in a sense pleasanter, to live in the tropics than it is to live in the temperate zones. To dwell where man needs no house barricaded against the biting winds, and where perennially the earth blossoms with flowers and the trees hang with luscious fruits, would seem a delight. But the fixed fact of history is that the stronger men do not come from the softer climates. They rather come out of the middle north, where the breezes are sharp and man becomes hardy and strong through his continuous struggle. The Quaker poet touches beauti-

fully on this idea in his lines, "For an Autumn Festival:"

"God gives us with our rugged soil
The power to make it Eden-fair,
And richer fruits to crown our toil
Than summer wedded islands bear.

Who murmurs at his lot to-day?
Who scorns his native flower and bloom?
Or sighs for dainties far away,
Beside the bounteous board at home?

Thank Heaven, instead, that Freedom's arm
Change a rocky soil to gold, —
That brave and generous lives can warm
A clime with Northern ices cold.

And let these altars, wreathed with flowers
And piled with fruits, awake again
Thanksgivings for the golden hours,
The early and the latter rain." *

So if the children of the tropics can thank God for a life of balm, the children of the North can thank Him for a vast compensation.

* Household Edition, p. 260.

May not all this be taken as showing forth the wisdom of God's plan and the justice of our gratitude? He does not deliver men from difficulties; He strengthens men to meet difficulties. His method is not that of deliverance, but that of strength. In this respect we often follow God's way. What makes the sailor? Is it the easy process of lying on the deck and feeling the pleasant winds of the sea as they play about his face? Is it freedom from storm and darkness? Nay, rather it is climbing aloft amid the rigging when the ocean is mad, when winds blow, when the ship heaves with the billows, and the great masts creak and groan! This makes the sailor—not the absence of difficulties, but the conquest of difficulties. Our mistaken plea might be for a life without a hindrance or a difficulty; God's plea is for a man with fortitude and perseverance. In our better times we come to adopt and to honor the divine way.

We must all have wondered, too, at the

decision and persistence that are necessary in order that man may come to any conquest in knowledge. We must spend about one-third of life in study before we are highly educated. Ten years are spent in primary and grammar school, four years in preparatory school, four in college, and three or four in the professional school. Ere we know it, one-third or more of our life is gone. It is scarcely to be wondered that young persons grow discouraged at the long outlook and that the most of them drop their studies at an early age. We have all wished that there was a royal road to geometry; that the limbs of the tree of knowledge did not grow so high; that we might, at any rate, be relieved of the mental struggles and difficulties that lie in the way to an exact education. We might imagine some man with a genuine thirst for knowledge offering this prayer: "O God, my poor mind must crawl toward knowledge. The effort is long and hard. Deliver me from these trying efforts. Work

within me a mental miracle. By a quick revelation equip me for life's work and pour something of Thine infinite truth into my mind." Sure we are that to a man of this spirit God would give no answer according to the man's request. For this thing the man might pray the Lord that his ignorance should depart from him. But the Lord would say, "My grace is sufficient for thee." And more than one young man who trembled at the thought of intellectual toil has found himself not made sufficient without it, but made sufficient for it, and has come out to active life altogether stronger, more self-reliant, and far more self-respecting than he would have been if the difficulties had been removed rather than the strength imparted and accepted. Our dawdling desire might call for a made-to-order brain, crammed with knowledge all labeled and ready for use. But God's method calls for a man, with mental purpose, with plodding mind, with solid thoughts whose getting has required man-

hood, and whose getting has also made more manhood. If God has given us grace to work in this spirit, we have abundant reason for gratitude.

Plainly now, it is true enough that in our moral lives God will not forsake His usual methods. It may be that some of us would ask for a heart without doubts, with automatic morality, with machine-like holiness. But God does not have it so. He would have men with doubts, with moral struggles, with intense strivings after holiness. Mr. Huxley, as quoted by Mr. Drummond, says, "I protest that if some great Power would agree to make me always think what is true and do what is right, on condition of being turned into a sort of clock and wound up every morning, I should instantly close with the offer." These words may show a great moral desire, but they certainly do not show any great moral heroism. Our own standards of admiration will convince us of their weakness.

Here are two men. One of them is slow, phlegmatic, quiet, passionless. By very nature he takes things easy. You may admire him and speak well of his constancy and of his easy morality. But here is another man, who is quick, active, full of passion. He often wishes that he were not so. It may be that he has sometimes prayed that these moral thorns might depart. He has looked upon the life of his quiet brother and has almost envied his apparently natural goodness. If it be that we find this second man true, holding a controlling hand over his quick and passionate nature, he is more worthy of admiration, yea, and more representative of divine helpfulness, than is the first man. We protest, therefore, that if some great Power were to offer an immediate and clock-like goodness, we would instantly reject the offer. We can well thank God for the privilege of earnest co-operation with Him, by the grace of Christ and under the leadership of His Spirit, in working out our characters.

It may be that we have wished that we might have freedom from the irksome duties of the every-day. Perhaps none of us have been bold enough to come to God and ask Him that our hard tasks might depart; for we have felt that such a petition would be ignoble. We can readily imagine that there would be something charming and delightful in full deliverance from certain vexing labors. But there is a greater thing than this full deliverance. Is it not greater and better to hear God say: "I can not send away your duties. But I will help you to be true to them. My grace is sufficient." If we have gone to our work and have put patient hands upon it for the day, the month, the year, being faithful to every trust, and loyal to every demand, surely there is with us a peace of heart that is the essence of gratitude.

This special aspect of Thanksgiving Day gains emphasis from a knowledge of its beginning. When, after the first harvest gathered by the New England colonists in 1621,

Governor Bradford made provision for a day of praise, his word came to men and women who had known hardship. Their loved ones had been stricken with disease; their numbers had been decreased by death; their efforts had been stubbornly resisted by the rocky soil and the bleak winds of the Atlantic Coast; their safety had been threatened by the Indians; in short, their year had been one of unspeakable struggle. Yet they set for us the precedent of faith. We have no record of their first thanksgiving prayer; but we know that it might properly have included mighty praises for the divine grace that had made them sufficient for their toils and privations. If God had not made them miraculous gardens, He had given them patient and skillful hands. If He had not stilled the tempests of winter, He had given them strength to build their homes. If He had not kept disease away from their settlement, He had granted the trust that unmurmuringly surrenders the beloved to His holy

keeping. If He had not tempered the spirits of the savages, He had strengthened the spirits of the Puritans. If those who kept that first Thanksgiving had prayed that the thorns should depart, God had given the deeper answer. Instead of working without merely, He had worked within. In our day it is easy to see that the largest reason of thanksgiving was in the spirits of the people to whom God had said amid all their tribulations, "My grace is sufficient."

Nor ought this sermon to close without some reference to the harsh and exceptional things that have come as sharp thorns into your lives. Since last Thanksgiving many of you have known sorrows—sorrows deep and poignant. Had some one told you a year ago of their coming you would not have believed that you could endure them. Yet you are in this service to-day; and your heart, while questioning, is not bitter or rebellious. You thus carry within you the divine answer to your prayer and your own reason for

gratitude. The good God has not freed you from the hard thing; but He has said, "My grace is sufficient."

The truth is that God has vast reserves of grace, even as He has given us vast reserves of receptivity and so vast reserves of endurance. In a physical crisis we are often amazed at our own strength. The impossible of ordinary times is the possible of extraordinary times. The power must have been ever at command, only hidden and waiting for the occasion that should call it forth. Men, too, are often surprised at the power which their minds will show at some critical moment. Thoughts seem to catch fire, argument fastens itself to argument, and the crisis makes us strangely alert. If this occurs in spite of singular difficulties, the triumph is only the sweeter. In the end we rejoice more because of the work brought to success over obstacles than we rejoice over the work that moved smoothly to its completion. When we are made equal to the heavy

and difficult tasks, our exultation is the greater. Our gratitude should be likewise greater.

It is even thus with the spiritual. The trustful man will find that God has endowed his nature with an immense fund of spiritual reserve-power. That reserve-power manifests itself quite as truly in the enduring of sorrow as in the doing of work. We never know what we can stand until the necessity is full upon us; then God makes us equal to the terrible day. To go bravely through with the trial often means more than it would have meant to have missed it altogether. It is a great thing if we can escape the dark den, or if the lions are struck dead in answer to our cry. It is a greater thing to go in among the roaring beasts and to come forth unharmed. It is a large thing to escape the mouth of the fiery furnace; it is a greater thing to walk amid the flames with the "form of the Fourth" beside us, and to come out at length without the smell of fire upon our garments.

This word applies in a measure to you all. You have this year seen some dark disaster threatening your life—and you have prayed for deliverance. It may be that the deliverance came. Perhaps it did not. It was sickness that you feared. You said, "O God, spare me this suffering." In spite of your prayer the sickness came. The Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It was the greater test of divine helpfulness that you should through weeks of pain have been kept patient, steadfast, unmurmuring. It was poverty that you feared. You said, "O God, spare me this vexation and worry." God said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It was the greater proof of divine aid that you were able to pass without distrustful complaint from the place of plenty to the place of want. It may be that it was something more dreaded than sickness or poverty that seemed to approach—even the touch of death laid upon your beloved. Out of the depths you cried: "O God, spare me this loss. Pity

me!" God may have answered simply and tenderly, "My grace is sufficient for thee." His grace in such a sorrow is a token of sympathy as well as a fact of help. For all this you may bring praise to God on this Thanksgiving Day. The minor note in your gratitude need not rob your mood of reality. The power to endure, to resist, to hold steady, is a part of the power of life. The God who gives it is worthy of our worship and love.

Even at the peril of seeming to move in a circle of speech and thought, there is a sense in which we may be thankful for thankfulness. In these pews to-day are gathered friends who have walked this year over stony paths. The fact that you are here as genuine participants in this service tells of an inner victory. Your hearts have kept their faith. Driven to the deeper courts of life, you have found sure witnesses of the divine goodness. You may be grateful for your own gratitude. Here now with your loved ones and neighbors you reverently look to

God and give Him praise for the mercies of the year that outwardly has seemed so barren and unblessed. It is easy enough for the prosperous to utter the common-place of good cheer, easy enough to mention the spiritual compensations to our afflicted friends. Yet we all know the deeper truth of this Pauline experience. The greater heart is the register of its own triumphs; it is its own proof of the divine care and aid. The brutish man may not understand; but the children of God know the lesson. They to whose troubled and broken hearts God's voice has spoken, saying, "My grace is sufficient," may join with us fervently in the keeping of this great Feast of Praise.

3

THANKSGIVING FOR SERVICE

TEXT: *"I thank Him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that He counted me faithful, appointing me to His service."*—1 TIM. i, 12 (R. V.).

WE now stand amid the annual festival of the harvest and the home. The theme of gratitude is to be chief in our thought. It may then be well for us to get hold of some ideas that will lift and regulate our thinking, making it really high and spiritual.

We pause, therefore, before this text and take it as our teacher. It gives us the terms of gratitude. Its first words are, *"I thank."* Gratitude must come down at last to the personal unit. Strictly speaking, there can be no such thing as a national Thanksgiving;

for there can be no real nation except that which is made up of human hearts. Alice in Wonderland came upon the problem as to whether there could be a smile apart from a face. Of course there could not be; for smiles do not hang in the air. So there can not be thankfulness apart from a personal soul. If we have a day worthy to be called a national Thanksgiving, it will be only because individual men among our people unite in one spirit, each man saying "I thank."

The day must not only come down to a personal unit, it must go up at last to a personal end. The first three words of the text are, "I thank Him." We have here the two parties to the transactions of gratitude—the human and the divine. Thanksgiving is never meaningful and complete till there is just one man and just one God—the one human heart answering with gratitude to the benefits of the one Divine Heart and saying, "I thank Him."

This gives us the terms of thankfulness,

but it does not give us its grades. A man may truly say, "I thank Him," and still keep his gratitude on the earthly plane. It is indeed significant that from the beginning our formal Thanksgiving Day has been appointed for just after the harvest. The season is eminently appropriate; but it should not be allowed to hold our gratitude down to the ground. There is a grade of gratitude that creeps on the soil; there is also a grade of gratitude that soars in the sky.

This text is valuable because it represents a higher form of thanksgiving. Its phrases are all spiritual. Does Paul write, "I thank Him for food, for clothing, for shelter?" No! There are no material terms in the passage. In these words the apostle is found to be absent from the body; he has reached the spirit world. Does he write: "I thank Him for friends, for kindly associations, for the homes where I, an itinerant, have been entertained?" No! In other parts of his writings Paul emphasizes these

things. In the Epistle to the Philippians he thanks God for their care for his bodily well-being; and in the Epistle to Philemon he thanks God for his friends. He was too real a man and had too real human needs to make light of any of God's good gifts. The height of Paul's gratitude did not destroy its breadth. He was grateful for material blessings, grateful for social joys. But in this particular passage he goes beyond these regions. He rises above the lowlands—fresh and beautiful as they are; above the hill-crests—bright and serene as they are; and he comes to the mountain heights, where the breezes blow free and the rays of the sun shine first and last.

It is ever our tendency to hold our petitions down. We forget so easily that the deeper blessings can be conferred only on the spirit. The prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," seems more definite and real to us than its companion, "Hallowed be Thy name." We are more prone to say,

"O God, give me health," than we are to say, "O God, give me a pure heart." James Russell Lowell tells how he had once seen a goat kneeling down on its foreknees in order that it might eat grass with less difficulty. Is there a spiritual parable in this? The action of the animal seemed to Mr. Lowell to suggest the common notion of prayer. He writes: "Most people are ready enough to go down on their knees for material blessings, but how few for those spiritual gifts which alone are the answers to our orisons if we but knew it."

And if we are apt to be material in our petitions we are by the same token apt to be material in our thanksgivings. It is also our tendency to hold our thankfulness down. Thanksgiving Day is the day of gratitude for the harvest and the home. This is all good; it is even Scriptural. But it does not include necessarily the elements of this suggestive text. We may well wonder whether there is not such a thing as purely animal

gratitude—whether the satisfied grunt of the swine in trough and pen is not nearly equivalent to much of our thanksgiving. We are only too likely to miss the spiritual side. Is it right that the sons of that God who is a Spirit should not go up into the spiritual life to seek causes for gratefulness? If man is a spirit but has a body, is he to allow the gratitude for the things which minister to what he has to surpass in volume and fervor the gratitude for the things which minister to what he is? Is there not need of care here in order that gratitude may be, not the expression of refined selfishness, but rather the sign and spur of holy character and holy service?

Thus Paul lifts thankfulness into the upper realms. He refuses to remain in the field or even in the home. He goes to the temple with its supreme lesson for the soul, and there he writes his word appropriate to the sacred place, "I thank Him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus the Lord, for that He

counted me faithful, appointing me to His service." This is the proclamation to the republic of Christian souls? It is a call to the highest thanksgiving!

What are the special characteristics of this finer grade of thankfulness as seen in the text? There is, first, gratitude for personal power: "I thank Him that *enabled* me." There is also gratitude for personal character: "I thank Him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that *He counted me faithful.*" There is especially gratitude for personal opportunity: "I thank Him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that He counted me faithful, *appointing me to His service.*" All these are the terms of the spirit. The large figures of the market place and the healthful beating of the pulse are absent. Instead of mentioning only what one has received, it recalls what one has been enabled to be and to do. It is thus a thanksgiving that grows up out of benevolence rather than out of selfishness.

This opens the gate of gratitude to all good men. It may appear to some of you that in the lower ranges of life you find little for which you can be grateful. Business has not been successful. Its burdens and problems have grown heavier and larger throughout the year. Your bodily health has not been good. Nerves have been shaken and racked. You have wondered how much longer you would have strength to carry your load. All this has led to mental worry. Your mind has been haunted by specters. It may thus be that you have approached this holiday feeling that you have small cause for thankfulness. But this text opens the door for you. It contains no reference to bodily health or to business prosperity; and yet it is a pæan of gratitude.

The secret is this: The apostle looks up into the highest places of life. He could not be grateful for commercial prosperity. There were times when his friends ministered to his material necessities. He could

not be grateful for bodily health. All his life long he carried his thorn in the flesh which pricked him with unceasing pain. He found his cause for gratitude in higher things. So may it be with us. It is said that sometimes vessels lie in the ocean utterly becalmed. The waters are dead and unruffled. The discouraged voyagers stand upon the deck and long for the harbor. They look at the surface of the sea; they find no movement that calls for gratitude; the ocean aggravates them with its quietness. But at last they look up; they see the wee pennant at the head of the mast as it begins to flutter. The breeze is aloft. It fills the upper sails. Then straight over that dead level of waters they move away under the power of a higher breeze.

Do any of us as we approach the festival of Thanksgiving have the feeling expressed in Longfellow's "Becalmed:"

> "Becalmed upon the sea of Thought,
> Still unattained the land it sought,

My mind with loosely hanging sails,
Lies waiting the auspicious gales.

"On either side, behind, before,
The ocean stretches like a floor—
A level floor of amethyst,
Crowned by a golden dome of mist.

"Blow, breath of inspiration, blow!
Shake and uplift this golden glow!
And fill the canvas of the mind
With wafts of thy celestial wind.

"Blow, breath of song! until I feel
The straining sail, the lifting keel,
The life of the awakening sea,
Its motion and its mystery!" *

Has this parable of the sailor no meaning for us? It may be that our voyage this past year has not been prosperous. If we have not been stormed or shipwrecked, we have at any rate been becalmed and have made little or no progress. But if we have been leading the Christian life truly we can catch

*Household Edition, p. 402.

the grateful touch of breezes on the upper sails. If we know that we have added to our spiritual power, to our spiritual character, to our spiritual service, we have the ground for the highest thanksgiving. No one has any truer right or fuller duty to say, "I thank God."

We should be grateful for personal power. Over us all He has pronounced an enabling act. We may not have all the power we could wish; but we have enough to make us responsible, enough also to make us grateful. There is some strength in our arm, some in our mind, some in our heart. We have an influence. We are not zeros. There is joy in the sense of the ability that God gives us. Quite without regard now to what we do with our ability, there is joy in its possession. Men rejoice in physical strength even when they do not lift. They rejoice in mental strength even when they do not teach. They rejoice in social strength even when they pass their hours in voluntary solitude.

If God has so empowered us that a cipher does not express our lives, we have a deep cause for thanksgiving. There is, therefore, no one of us who can not repeat the first of this text, "I thank Him that *enabled* me."

We must go farther than this: personal power may be even disastrous unless it be guarded by personal character. We should thank God if in any degree He counts us faithful. It may be that in this case we have not much to be grateful for; but surely there is something. At some time in this year you have heard God say, "Well done." Are we better than we were a year ago? Are we more just? Are we kinder? Are we more generous? Is conscience keener and quicker? Do we feel that God has helped us in the general movement and spirit of our lives to be more faithful? In brief, have we grown in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Then let us be grateful! If we become good only as we accept

the illumination of that Light that lighteth every man; if

> "Every virtue we possess,
> And every victory won,
> And every thought of holiness
> Is His and His alone,"

then surely we have cause for thanksgiving. Shall we remember to thank Him for what He hath done for our bodies and forget to thank Him for what He hath done for our souls? If we can not feel that we have added to ourselves this past year the treasures of more Christlike character, let us turn our Thanksgiving Day into a time of fasting and of prayer in order that, ere its sun goes down, we may joyfully add the second element of the text: "I thank Him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that He counted me *faithful.*"

We should thank God, also, for personal service. When we have brought in this third cause of gratitude, how divine does our Thanksgiving become? If we conceive that

there is something in the heart of God that corresponds to the grace of gratitude, we must suppose that it is exercised on the spiritual plane. The three elements of the text are all seen in His relations to us. If this book teaches us aright, the thing for which God will be most grateful will be that we make room in our lives for Him to show His infinite power, His infinite faithfulness, His infinite service. Is not all this in harmony with the thought of His Trinity? The Father of Infinite Power! The Son of Infinite Faithfulness, loving unto death! The Spirit of Infinite Helpfulness, evermore expressing Himself in the tender moving of His people's hearts! No thanksgiving is complete unless it brings in this third cause. If God is most grateful when He can do something for man, shall not man be most grateful when he can do something for God? If, then, in this past year you have been a partner in the divine work, how thankful you should be? Let the field thank God not simply because

it gets sun and dew and rain, but also because it gets a harvest. Let the vine thank God not only because it sucks life from the soil and coaxes life from the air, but also because at last it is weighted with luscious fruit. So let man be grateful not only because God gives to him, but also, and especially, because he has the privilege of giving to God. "I thank Him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus the Lord, for that He counted me faithful, *appointing me to His service.*" If a man holds himself to the lower plane he may find it hard to be as grateful as he would gladly feel; if he rises to this higher plane he will find it difficult to get words strong enough to express his gratitude. It is just as one Robert Davis has stated it in "The Better Prayer:"

"I thank Thee, Lord, for strength of arm
To win my bread,
And that beyond my need is meat
For friend unfed.
I thank Thee much for bread to live,
I thank Thee more for bread to give.

"I thank Thee, Lord, for snug-thatched roof
In cold and storm,
And that beyond my need is room
For friend forlorn.
I thank Thee much for place to rest,
But more for shelter for my guest.

"I thank Thee, Lord, for lavish love
On me bestowed,
Enough to share with loveless folk
To ease their load.
Thy love to me I ill could spare,
Yet dearer is Thy love I share." *

This is gratitude for the opportunity of personal service. Have you in the past year been allowed to help some one? Have you lifted a load from some weary heart? Have you made some sick-chamber brighter? Have you had the chance to give to God's work? Is some one now walking in the way of life because you were appointed to His service? If you are in real partnership with God in making the world better, thank Him truly. Make up your mind that in the points

* The Outlook, February 27, 1909.

of personal power, personal character, personal service, you shall have more cause for gratitude a year hence than you have now. As gratitude rises higher the whole movement of life will follow it upward until at last we lose ourselves in perfect praise because we have reached the land of perfect power, perfect character, and perfect service.

VIII

THE FINAL CAUSE OF THANKSGIVING

THE FINAL CAUSE OF THANKSGIVING

TEXT: *"Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."*—PSALM XXX, 4.

IF the spirit of gratitude is to be awakened in the hearts of those who hear this Thanksgiving message, it will be necessary that we think together of some ground that is unmistakably common to all. It is probably true that, if we wished to do so, we could find reason for thankfulness in the material side of our lives; for we have not been reduced to starvation or nakedness or homelessness. But without doubt there would be vast differences among us in this respect. Some of us have walked with steady feet up the ascent of prosperity, commanding ever a wider outlook upon the things of earth.

Others of us have slipped down the hill, which we had before climbed toward ease and independence, and the outlook shuts itself in to dark and narrow valleys. If, therefore, the word for this hour related to material prosperity, some would respond with quick gladness, while others would move toward the thought with sad reluctance.

There would be like differences at the standpoint of physical well-being. Some of us have walked through the past year with a strong step; the bed of sickness has not held us for a day, nor even for an hour. Others of us have known inactivity; the couch has claimed us for weary weeks; pain has tramped upon our nerves like some heartless beast. Still others have had a year in which joy and sorrow, success and failure, health and sickness have strangely mingled. But we have never been truly grateful until, like Job in the great epic with its movement from prosperity to adversity, and from adversity to prosperity again, we have seen all

states of life as comprehended in God's gracious plan. Smiling lips and moaning lips can both thank God only when the heart is carried up to where the contrasts in condition are joined in some harmony of goodness.

Nor would it be well to deal simply with the political causes for gratitude. In every large congregation there are men of all parties, and the pulpit can not well be turned into a platform. Some would deem our nation's prosperity a fact, others would deem it a myth; some would consider the changes in the world's map as indicating the advance of civilization, others would take them to mean the march of brutality. Some would feel that the tariff makes them rich; others that it keeps them poor. It is not the province of the preacher in his ordinary ministrations to defend or attack any of these views, but to unite all partisans in the higher agreement of love and obedience as inspired by the divine holiness.

From this you will see that if our thank-

fulness is to be unanimous, its field must be above our differences in situation and in opinion. We must rise beyond the office; for the ledger often tells a story of hardship. We must move away from the hospital; for its register is one of anxiety and pain. We must leave the political headquarters; for from one we would hear a shout and from the other we would hear a wail. Our gratitude must go up toward Him who is the Owner of the earth, with its silver and gold; toward Him who by the discipline of the world's suffering prepares men for the painless and deathless country; toward Him who presides over all our partisanship and is to be at last the Ruler of all rulers. In this effort to gain a common and lofty ground for our gratitude, let us raise our thanksgiving to the very highest thing and let us heed this ancient commandment, "Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

You will note that this text connects thanksgiving with remembrance. Perhaps

more than any other day in the year this holiday is a day for a personal retrospect. The only date which would challenge its field in this respect is New Year's Day, and that, as even its name indicates, looks forward rather than backward; it is a day for resolves rather than for remembrance. Whatever may be the reason for a man's gratitude, it has to do in some form with his memory. If he is thankful for his future it is because he throws into it the confidence that he has won from his past. This is true in reference even to the gratitude that a man would feel for the promised heaven. He who is thankful for worldly success gives thanks because he remembers; he who is thankful for bodily health gives thanks because he remembers; he who is thankful for political victory gives thanks because he remembers. And he who is thankful for the highest thing gives thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness. Thanking is simply remembering seasoned with justice and reverence; it is

thinking backward over the past and upward to God. It is thought climbing from the lowest to the highest. It is the mind traversing its old journeys, recognizing that God's company was all along the ways, and lifting up here and there memorials of the divine holiness. The word of the psalmist thus states the process through which one must come to his real thanksgiving.

But we have here given not merely the path along which gratitude comes, but also the goal which gratitude must reach. Unless a man's heart arrives at God, the day is without meaning. A few years ago one of the governors of our States gave out a proclamation in which the name of God did not occur. The omission created much comment, and we need not wonder that it did. An atheistic people could have no Thanksgiving Day. Such a day without God would be an eye with nothing to see, a voice with nothing to hear, a heart with nothing to love. It would be a road leading no whither, and every

walker on it would be an aimless traveler without a destination. It is true that men might have a Thanksgiving Day wherein they should pass from house to house and from man to man, giving praise to humankind for help and friendship; such a day would not be without its value and its joy.

But in the ordinary sense a Thanksgiving Day is impossible without a God. It is the conception that He broods in holiness over our lives that alone gave the day its historic beginning and continues it until now. If the time ever comes when the American people forget God the day will pass from the calendar and will become the mere relic of an abandoned faith. This psalmist-thinker leads us straight to this thought. True gratitude can not stop short of God. So far as the purport of the day is concerned, as judged by the proclamation of our President and governors, the atheist, whether he be such in belief or only in the practical bearing of his life, is merely an onlooker. He views

the foolish thankfulness of the people and is shut away from all the meaning of the holiday. He can not bow before a blank; he can not speak praise to insensibility; he can not be grateful to nothingness. If ever a man is the victim of his own unfaith, it must be on Thanksgiving Day. At that time no man can really get on unless he has a God. In deepest truth he can have no gratitude because it is impossible for him to obey the command, "Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

There are times when gratitude simply necessitates God. Then the thankful spirit opens a plain path into His presence. We have been accustomed to put more emphasis upon the need of God as a refuge for us in our sorrow than upon the need of Him as the only goal of our Thanksgiving. But in neither case can we find satisfaction without Him. A man walks out on a day when the earth seems wrapped in gloom and dampness. The frost has pinched off every blos-

som and every leaf. The very air seems his enemy and creeps about him like some stealthy foe, waiting for a chance to pierce him with sickness. The earth has taken on the color of the man's feelings. He is disappointed; his hopes have faded; his success has turned to failure; a vast sorrow has fallen upon him. The relief and the only relief for that man in his adversity is God.

Or another man walks out when the earth is robed in garments of glory. The sun has opened the blossoms and spread the leaves. The very air is his friend and fondles him with the caresses of summer breezes, pouring upon him streams of health and vitality. He is happy; his hopes are blooming. This man needs God as much as the other man. The one needs Him as a refuge in his trouble; the other needs Him as an object for His gratitude. The stoic may bear his grief in silence and may set himself against the shock of things. But the grateful man can not hold his gratitude in silence. Sor-

row may exist without a refuge; but thankfulness can not exist without an object. It is not, then, too much to say that this psalmist was right when he carried gratitude up to God. There is no stopping-place this side of the Infinite. If man is to be grateful at all for the thousand things that lie beyond human creation and human control, he must furnish himself with a God. His appreciation can not hang in the midair, moving on to no object. When a man truly puts his feet on the way of gratitude he finds that he can not halt until he comes to God Himself.

But this text does a more thorough work than we have yet mentioned. It connects gratitude with the processes of a sanctified memory. It insists that our thankfulness shall have reference to God; and it demands that we shall take a large view of God and of His relations to our lives. Thanksgiving Day has been put at the close of the harvest season, when the fruits of the field have been gathered into the granaries and the song of

plenty is in the land. But let it be said again that we shall err if we allow our thought to remain in the fields and keep the day down until it lies in the dust. God gives us harvests; but He gives us things more and higher. The treasures of humankind are not all gathered into barns or banks. It is not wise to think of God too exclusively in reference to the fragments which move upon our lives at the prompting of His complete nature. God has power; we may be thankful. God has wisdom; we may be thankful. God has truth; we may be thankful. God has love; we may be thankful. But the highest thing to be thankful for is that He has all these and everything else that is good. He has holiness, wholeness, completeness. His life keeps itself in infinite balance. It would be small comfort to have a God of power who was not also a God of love. Then we would have a tyrant on the throne of the worlds. It would be small comfort to have a God of wisdom who was not also a God of

power—One who was an idealist with endless theories that He Himself could not promote. Aye, and it would be a terrible thing to have a God of love who was not likewise a God of wisdom and a God of power—One who was merely a sentimentalist, tormented with the sense of His own helpless benevolence. But a God of holiness has all of these attributes and holds them in the balance of His perfect nature. What wonder is it, then, that the psalmist breaks out into the call, "Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness!"

The human illustration is near at hand to help our thought. We all know men who make us think of God. One such may appear to your mind now. He has a strong arm, a cool judgment, a trained mind, a kind heart. He has in his finite sphere something of that poise of character that God has in His infinite sphere. The attributes of power, truth, wisdom, and love belong to him. He moves close up to obedience to that staggering com-

mand, "Be ye holy; for I the Lord your God am holy." He makes no loud claims. He avoids the pharisaism of self-praise. He keeps free from the censoriousness of the privileged. He uses the ideal as a stimulus to himself rather than as a rebuke to others. Now let that man be related to your life. Within all proper limits he will lend you his power, guide you with his judgment, share with you his knowledge, comfort you with his friendship. For such a one you must be truly thankful. You know that whatever comes within the reach of his ability will be well done. For that man's being there is gratitude. You meet him on the street and you are glad. You see him in his home and you are glad. You merely know that he *is*, and in that knowledge you are glad. How thankful should be the community that has large numbers of such men—the well-balanced, wholesome, whole men, Christlike and Godlike!

What, then, shall be our feeling when we

catch the infinite fact for which this illustration stands? No man has ever yet discovered how to be glad and grateful unless his heart experiences the remembrance of the divine holiness. Gratitude is impossible without a God, and gratitude is feeble without a holy God. Life becomes great and rich and full and fearless only under the training of that thought. Life is tame, stale, doubtful, and joyless save as it rests upon the foundation of infinite holiness. When you have taken that away the world is jarred and wrenched from its safety. It follows that gratitude on Thanksgiving can never rise to any height until one has learned to heed the call, "Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

The beauty and helpfulness of this suggestion lie in the fact that it does lift us above all untoward conditions and temporary disappointments. So far as our troubles have arisen from our own willfulness and carelessness we may reproach ourselves;

but so far as they have arisen from causes beyond our control we may trust in the holiness of God. This gratitude may be given in the time of prosperity. If the holy God—the Father of unfailing power, of unerring wisdom, of boundless love—has sent you success, it is well. You can be grateful. His holiness has moved upon you in sunshine and gladness; it has bathed you in the joys of living; it has exalted the year until it is in truth a tender memory. Your home is unbroken; your table has been spread with a sufficiency, if not with a plenty; you and yours have not been crippled in the journey; goodness and mercy have followed the year until its paths have dropped with fatness; and above it all has been the sense of the divine and holy care expressing itself in all these gifts. Well may you "give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness!"

If it has been otherwise with any of you, your consolation is still the same. Both the prosperity and the adversity of good men

are joined in the harmony of God's holiness. Your home has been broken; your table has not suggested bounty; you and yours have been crippled in the journey; the paths of the year have been hard and lean; if you were to write one word across the calendar of the days since last Thanksgiving, it would be the word, "Struggle." But if you are God's child, the consolation is as much with you as with the son of prosperity. All the days have been in the holiness of God. If it were not so, every word of thanksgiving would freeze upon your lips; every prayer of praise would halt in your throat; and every feeling of trust would flee from your heart. The one refuge for the thought of the year, the one gracious solution of your problem, lies here: "Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." As long as you keep a holy God you keep an infinite reason for thankfulness. How can we fret and pine when God is holy! If it were possible to conceive of any life stripped of wealth, stripped of

friends, stripped of health, bare of all material and social blessings, and yet keeping in a true and serene heart a real faith in the holiness of God, that man could be carried on a hard cot, by strange hands, out of the morning's drizzle and cold, and could warm himself here at the glowing altar of the divine holiness.

This, then, is a message for us all. It lifts us above our differences in situation, above our differences in partisan opinion, and brings us to a high and common sanctuary. The doorway to this consoling place is ever ajar. The message gathers you all out of your sadness and gladness, out of your failure and success, out of your sickness and health, out of your poverty and abundance—and it puts you all into the companionship of this text. It lifts, and lifts, and lifts until it lodges us all in the care of the divine completeness.

Whittier in "The Eternal Goodness" uses the much quoted words:

"I see the wrong that round me lies,
I feel the guilt within;
I hear, with groan and travail cries,
The world confess its sin.

Yet in the maddening maze of things
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings;
I know that God is good." *

Even so! God is more than good! He is wise so that He can guide His goodness; and He is strong so that He can enforce His goodness. He is holy! That is the "fixed trust" for the soul. No wonder Whittier soon writes the less familiar verse:

"I dimly guess from blessings known
Of greater out of sight,
And, with the chastened Psalmist own
His judgments, too, are right."

The perfected spirit of this festival day rests in a perfect God and gives thanks "at the remembrance of His holiness."

* Household Edition, p. 819.